

EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP IN THE 21ST CENTURY:
OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

A THESIS-PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY

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To Allison, my fellow pilgrim and partner.
I am forever grateful for Jesus making us one.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- CPC: Christ Presbyterian Church. Christ Presbyterian Church is in Nashua, New Hampshire and is a part of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA)
- DMin: Doctor of Ministry. This may refer to the program or degree, depending on the context
- FIND: Faith, Inquiry aNd Discovery. Evangelism course at Richmond Hill Chinese Church in Toronto, Canada.
- GCTS: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Located in South Hamilton, Massachusetts.
- LCF: Life Christian Foundation. A Christian ministry located in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa.
- MOPS: Mother's of Preschoolers. A Christian ministry located in Denver, Colorado.
- NNEP: Presbytery of Northern New England. Made up of 9 small congregations in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.
- PCA: Presbyterian Church in America. Denomination in the USA.
- PET: Personal Evangelism Training. A training course at Richmond Hill Chinese Church in Toronto, Canada.
- TAG: TAG Consulting is a business located in Virginia.
- UNILA: Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana. Large international university in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil.

ABSTRACT

This thesis-project is intended to help Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashua, NH be more effective in evangelism and discipleship. The project looks at several factors such as hospitality, boldness, and lack of time, as well as other difficulties that inhibit fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20). The thesis-project looks at the Scriptures and current literature to examine these inhibiting factors and also to explore what they have to say about discipleship and evangelism. Several case studies of congregations that are taking creative approaches to evangelism and discipleship in different contexts provide potential models for new strategies.

CHAPTER ONE

HYPOTHESIS

The Problem

Several years ago, I was asked by a friend to look at a house they were considering for purchase. When I drove up to the house, I could see why they were considering the property. It was an impressive lot, beautiful land with a pond and pool in the backyard. It was large and stately with 4 floors and ample space for a family. Its curb appeal was strong, and I could see why my friends were so excited about this prospective home. However, as I began to walk around the property and look at it in detail, I grew more and more concerned that this house was going to be a problem. When I went inside the home, I found alarming particularities like water damage, paint peeling, and electrical work that was subpar. It was obvious that the previous homeowners had neglected this house for some time. There were cobwebs, dust, and dirt everywhere indicating that maintenance had not been a priority. From the curb the house looked lovely, and maybe when it was built, it was, but after examining the nuts and bolts up close, it was evident there were serious concerns. A lot of work would need to be done to return this home to its former glory.

Curb appeal is always possible when you are not looking at the details, and this is true of many Christian congregations. I think when we begin to look at a congregation, we might be tempted to say that at first appearance, it is healthy. Its website might look great. Perhaps the church building is nice, has an optimal location, or gives the impression that the church is bustling with activity and outreach. Maybe the congregation has a strong social media presence on the Internet. However, as I get to know a congregation over time, I see some concerns. These concerns could be wide ranging--

a lack of outreach and discipleship, weak biblical teaching, leadership that is absent, or questionable worship practices. It is not until closer inspection and time spent getting to know the people that make up the congregation that one can have a healthy assessment.

I have been associated with Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashua, New Hampshire for over 15 years. I love this congregation, and I understand I am not objective when it comes to an assessment of its health and vitality. However, over the course of my studies in my doctoral program, I have become aware of some concerns that should be addressed. Christ Presbyterian is not in as bad shape as that home I described above, but I think a helpful comparison can still be made. At first glance, Christ Presbyterian looks like a small, healthy congregation in New England. There is a lot to celebrate, and it has a wonderful heritage and foundation. If you visit Christ Presbyterian on a Sunday morning, you will be warmly welcomed and find a worship experience that is typical of a conservative Presbyterian congregation. After morning worship, people visit with one another and enjoy spending time together laughing and sharing stories about life in general. If you look at the bulletin, the financial picture is strong and there is a plurality of leadership. Since starting in 2004 as the solo pastor, Christ Presbyterian has steadily grown over the past fifteen years. Speaking with other Presbyterian pastors in New England, our congregation sounds typical and may even be considered one of the healthier churches. Our size, our circumstances, and our convictions are in line with other Presbyterian churches as well as non-Presbyterian congregations. We are not doing anything that is extraordinary; we look like a lot of other evangelical churches in New England.

So when I speak about a problem, it might be thought by some that I am being overly critical. I don't think it is an exaggeration to suggest that if I left there would be plenty of ministers who would jump at the opportunity to do ministry at Christ Presbyterian. However, as I have been here

for some time, there are some internal factors and issues that cause me concern. The problem comes down to a simple question: how can we be better at making disciples at Christ Presbyterian Church? Are we fulfilling the Great Commission as Jesus intended, or are we doing what all too often many congregations do, maintaining the status quo? I believe this is the problem that is facing Christ Presbyterian. How do we move from the status quo to a congregation that is a “disciple making church?” Edmund Chan’s book, *A Certain Kind*, defines disciple making as follows: “Disciple making is the process of bringing people into right relationship with God, and developing them to full maturity in Christ through intentional growth strategies, that they might multiply the entire process in others also.”¹ So I am asking the question, how are we intentionally making disciples at Christ Presbyterian?

The Setting

So let me give some context in order to state my hypothesis as well as address factors and questions that I have for this. My name is Jason S. Wakefield. I am an ordained Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). I have been at Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashua, New Hampshire since 2004. I am 49 years old, married for 24 years and have 3 grown children and a Belgian Malinois named Lucca. I am not a native New Englander; I grew up in Western Pennsylvania where I attended Grove City College, a small Presbyterian college. It was while I was attending university that I became a Christian, and after graduation in 1993, I spent a year serving in Northeast China as an English teacher with a Christian organization.

While visiting a friend in Beijing in February 1994, I felt called by God into full time ministry. I returned to the States and got involved in youth ministry work in both Michigan and Ohio. After

1. Edmund Chan, *A Certain Kind, Intentional Disciplemaking that Redefines Success in Ministry* (Singapore: Covenant Evangelical Free Church, 2013), 51.

eight years of doing youth ministry work, I made the decision with my family to enroll in graduate school. In 2001, we moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, and I attended Regent College. I graduated in 2004 with a Master of Divinity.

While living in Vancouver, we got involved with a city centered Presbyterian church plant called Grace Vancouver. It had an urban ministry to its neighborhood and was committed to prayer, outreach, and mercy ministry. I eventually interned at this congregation, and it was during that time in ministry that I felt called into church planting and revitalization. Working with denomination leadership, Allison and I went through an assessment process in Atlanta, Georgia, as well as training for the purpose of starting a new congregation or helping an existing struggling congregation. I was recruited by the Presbytery of Northern New England² to help a struggling congregation in Nashua. We came to Nashua in 2004 (fifteen years ago) as a church planter/revitalization pastor.

Nashua is an edge city of the Boston Metro area. As an edge city, Nashua has a dual personality. It has easy access to Boston through mass transit and infrastructure connecting Nashua to the rest of the Boston Metro region. At the same time, within minutes of the city limits of Nashua are farms and countryside connecting it to the more rural, agrarian culture of New Hampshire. So within 10 minutes of leaving my home, I can either take a motor coach to downtown Boston or ride my bicycle along roads that traverse the countryside. This also explains why Nashua's nickname is the "Gate City." Nashua has a population of around eighty thousand that swells to 125,000 when including the surrounding communities. It is in Hillsborough county which includes Manchester, the largest city in New Hampshire. This makes it the most diverse region in New Hampshire. There are several ethnic communities in Nashua along with congregations that minister to these people groups.

2. Presbytery of Northern New England is comprised of 8 congregations in Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine.

Nashua has a mixture of blue-collar and white-collar neighborhoods. Allison and I live in Ward 9 which is in Southwest Nashua and is typical of the larger Nashua area. Our neighbors are retirees, university professors, business men and women as well as a few firemen and contractors. Nashua has a large retail establishment because of the non-existent sales tax in New Hampshire and its close proximity to the Boston Metro area. There are a handful of evangelical churches in Nashua of various sizes and denominations. As is typical throughout New England, the largest Christian presence in Nashua is the Roman Catholic Church.

Christ Presbyterian Church (CPC) is one of the oldest Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) congregations in New England. Started in the late 1970s, it has always been a small congregation, and typifies the stereotype of the “Frozen Chosen” or “Reformed Refugee Outpost.” Before I arrived in 2004, it had five different pastors over a period of twenty-five years. Those twenty-five years were not good years. Leadership dealt with conflict, church discipline, and lay leadership changes that left many people, including the pastors, battered and bruised. In spite of the difficulties, the congregation spun off two other congregations in New Hampshire, and several Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary students who interned at the church are now in full time ministry across the country. We currently rent facilities in southern Nashua and have been at this location since 2003.

When Allison and I moved to New Hampshire in 2004, the church had no lay leadership, was not self-sustaining, and did not have a permanent worship location or office space. The presbytery took over the leadership of the congregation as it was designated as a mission church. A mission church is a congregation with no local session, no elders. Christ Presbyterian was “borrowing” elders from a PCA congregation in Concord, New Hampshire some thirty-five miles away. I was called by the Presbytery as an evangelist to Nashua in hopes of helping Christ Presbyterian return to a church with

its own local session. In 2004, the attendance was around fifteen to twenty people on a given Sunday, mostly older individuals with two young couples that had recently joined the congregation. Financially, the church was not able to support a full-time minister in 2004, so fundraising was necessary for the first several years of my ministry at CPC. By God's provision, every year we were able to raise just enough to keep us going, and we began to see some limited growth.

In 2009, the congregation was able to finally become financially self-sustaining and fundraising was no longer needed. The presbytery erected a commission to install me as the pastor and particularized the congregation after the ordination of new elders and establishment of a local session. In 2019, the congregation is fairly healthy, and made up mostly of young families. Over 80% of CPC's current attendees came after 2004. Attendance is better, averaging around fifty to sixty, still small but hardly struggling. The congregation has elders and deacons and is financially self-sustaining and raising money for a future permanent home for Christ Presbyterian.

In the fall of 2017, I asked the congregation and the Session of Christ Presbyterian to take the TAG consulting congregational survey. The results of the TCInsight report³ were incredibly helpful and accurately reflected what I mostly knew about the congregation. The purpose of the assessment was to measure fifteen facets of church life and see how CPC compares with other churches, as well as what the church values most of all. The fifteen facets are grouped into five dimensions: community, code, calling, cause and change.

3. TAG Consulting, *Transforming Church Insight*. (Fairfax, VA TAG Consulting, 2017), <https://app.box.com/s/iom2s1mg8w2zgeznee6xto9vbts2twuf>.

Table 1. TCInsight Report Results

Dimension	Facet	Christ Presbyterian Church Average Score	National Average Score
Community	Relationships	6.03	5.53
	Support	4.34	3.95
	Ownership	4.39	3.94
	Connectedness	3.65	3.23
	Vision	3.82	3.63
Code	Worship	3.83	3.98
	Learning	4.01	3.73
Calling	Building	2.92	3.79
	Leadership	4.33	3.80
	Finances	4.35	4.06
Cause	Outreach	3.00	3.77
	Families	3.28	3.81
Change	Involvement	3.28	3.53
	Innovation	3.65	4.87
	Implementation	3.84	3.80

1. Ownership (97%)
2. Leadership (96%)
3. Support (94%)
4. Relationships (90%)
5. Finances (90%)

Figure 1. Christ Presbyterian Church's Top 5 Facets

Three of the top 5 facets fall under the Community dimension. Christ Presbyterian values community more than anything else. We scored high on the facets that are Relationships, Support and Ownership. In fact, in these 3, we scored 90% or higher compared to other churches in North America, which means very few congregations value community more than Christ Presbyterian Church. This makes sense for several reasons. We are a small, tight knit church family compared to

larger churches in which you can sometimes feel lost and unknown. There is nowhere to hide at Christ Presbyterian; we are a community at heart.

The other major dimension we scored high in was Calling. Our last 2 facets in the top 5, Leadership and Finances, are found in this dimension. In these categories, we scored 90% or higher meaning that we feel strongly that we are doing better than 90% of other churches. CPC leadership is doing what they are supposed to be doing, and we are being good stewards of our financial resources.

These are the high scores of Christ Presbyterian, so where did we score the lowest on the survey? The bottom 5 are equally as telling.

1. Building (3%)
2. Outreach (4%)
3. Innovation (5%)
4. Families (13%)
5. Involvement (19%)

Figure 2. Christ Presbyterian Church's Lowest 5 Facets

We currently don't have our own building, so this low score is only stating the obvious. Scoring low on Outreach was more of an indictment of us as a church and me as a pastor. I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry in outreach and discipleship, and we are only scoring 4%. What am I doing wrong?

Innovation was the third lowest facet, and I had to laugh about this one. Innovation and Presbyterian just don't seem to go together very well. Historically, the Presbyterian church has rarely been thought of as innovative. In fact, many argue that the opposite is true, we are traditional in our faith and practice. The last of the bottom 5 were Families and Involvement. The Families ranking was one that surprised me, to be quite honest. It measures how much we value families and are effective

in ministering to them. However, the biggest question mark for me was the last one, Involvement.

We score high in Relationships, Support, Ownership and Connectedness and low in Involvement.

How is that possible? My theory is that we are a church that loves being together but does not have the time to be involved. I think many congregants feel strongly about this church, they love the church, but don't have time to be engaged in ministry. Whether it is work, kids, or life in general, people don't have the time.

The assessment of the survey was very helpful and did an excellent job of reflecting the state of Christ Presbyterian church. When I presented the findings to the congregation, there was agreement that the survey was correct in its assessment. We are strong in our identity and community, and we are weak in our evangelism and discipleship efforts. I saw many nod in agreement that we love being the church, but we don't have time to be engaged in ministry and even spend time with one another as much as we would like.

The focus of this project is concentrated on the efforts of Christ Presbyterian to do evangelism and discipleship. As indicated by the TCInsight survey, Christ Presbyterian Church's efforts in outreach and discipleship are modest at best. The Deacons at CPC give oversight to outreach and evangelism efforts. Outreach at CPC has two examples of engagement. The first is a MOPS ministry that is carried out with Grace Lutheran Church in Nashua, NH. MOPS is an international ministry based in Denver, CO and stands for Mothers of Pre-schoolers⁴. It is an outreach ministry to young moms in the Nashua area. It takes place twice a month during the school year. There is a special program for moms during which the children are supervised. We have been doing this ministry with Grace Lutheran for over 5 years, and it has ministered to dozens of young moms. More chapters have opened in Nashua as a result of this specific effort to minister to mothers in the Nashua area.

4. "Welcome to MOPS", MOPS, last modified January 28, 2020, <https://www.mops.org>.

The MOPS outreach has been successful, the group is always full, and the women who attend speak very well of it. It has brought some non-Christians to worship, but not to Christ Presbyterian. Because we do not have our own facility, we use Grace Lutheran's building, and they have benefited from being the host of the program. The women at CPC put a lot of work and leadership into the ministry, and this is a bit frustrating to them, as well as to the leadership at CPC. We are glad people are finding a church home but would hope our work in engaging people in the community would result in them coming to know Christ through the work of Christ Presbyterian.

This then leads to the only outreach at Christ Presbyterian that I would define as evangelistic. Several members of Christ Presbyterian regularly engage in sharing their faith in their workplaces and neighborhoods. This personal evangelism is carried out by mostly female members of CPC. These ladies ask me on a regular basis for prayer, resources, and help to share the gospel as they have opportunity. They have appreciated copies of *Honest Evangelism* by Rico Tice⁵ and *Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman⁶.

These church members have shared the gospel, invited me to speak to their friends or coworkers, and routinely invite people to Christ Presbyterian events. They are all working individually, and there is no formal program or oversight given. They have a personal conviction to share the gospel as they are given opportunity. For example, one church member has a hair salon in downtown Nashua and has literature as well as Bible verses that encourage patrons to ask about faith in Jesus. She is respectful and gracious and when she has opportunity, she prays for her customers. She has even opened her business for prayer on Monday nights for anyone who wants to pray for the city or is in need of personal prayer. This personal witness has been most encouraging, and I am

5. Rico Tice, *Honest Evangelism*. New Malden, Surrey, UK: The Good Book Company, 2015.

6. Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1963.

thankful for these members who want to share their faith. I enjoy exhorting them and praying for them as they attempt to share with those God has brought into their life.

Discipleship at Christ Presbyterian is on an upswing but is far from robust. Beyond what I am doing personally in discipleship, there are small groups and discipleship triplets that I have encouraged. The discipleship triplet is meant to be more intimate and flexible with three essential elements: accountability, study and prayer. The methodology is that for those who want to be challenged more in their walk with Christ, we have discipleship triplets. For those who are not as aggressive or unsure, there are small groups to participate in to encourage them in their walk with the Lord.

The Problem Further Explained and Assumptions

As reflected in the survey, members of CPC do not engage in outreach and discipleship on a regular basis. Small group ministry exists but only a minority of the membership participates. The life of the church is centered mostly on the Sunday morning worship experience.

There are three reasons for the Sunday morning focus. The first reason is that historically the church has prioritized Sunday morning. When I first arrived at Christ Presbyterian Church, Sunday morning was clearly the focus of this struggling congregation. There was a midweek prayer meeting which was good, but the Sunday morning worship was central to the identity of the congregation. When the congregation was founded back in the late 70s early 80s, to be legit they needed to meet for worship on Sunday mornings. The centrality of the worship service was further strengthened by the strong convictions of a previous minister who took a unique view of the Reformed faith regulative principle of worship. For a long time, the congregation did not use instruments, sang only from the psalter, did not recognize various Christian holidays like Christmas or Easter, and the minister was the principle speaker in the service. The service was without emotion, somber and reverent in nature.

One of the first things I did as the church plant revitalization pastor was to make changes to the worship service. Over the last 15 years, the worship service looks dramatically different and I think has been beneficial to the ministry of Christ Presbyterian. However, I am realizing that as a byproduct of this focus on the Sunday morning experience, we have neglected other aspects of the Christian faith such as evangelism and discipleship. This leads to the second reason.

Secondly, I, as the current pastor, have for years prioritized Sunday morning and found little time for discipleship and evangelism. This weakness is a result of my lack of engagement with evangelism and discipleship prior to this doctoral program. I have been operating a bit by the mindset of the original church planter, provide a Sunday morning worship service and people will come. Maybe I have been influenced by the well-known Kevin Costner film, *Field of Dreams* where a mysterious voice says, “If you build it he (they) will come.”⁷ So, if we make the Sunday morning worship experience at Christ Presbyterian a priority, it will attract people and the other ministries will be populated and successful due to the momentum of the Sunday morning worship experience. In this line of thinking, evangelism and discipleship will be a product of the worship experience. Historically the church has focused on Sunday morning, and I have followed suit by making it a priority as well.

The third reason Sunday morning is the focus is that Christ Presbyterian is a regional church. Christ Presbyterian is not a neighborhood congregation—people cannot walk to the church building and our identity is not tied to a particular neighborhood. In addition, we are not a neighborhood church because we don’t have a building. Christ Presbyterian Church has been located in Nashua its entire life, but only a small minority of members live in Nashua proper. At CPC, 6 families, including

7. *Field of Dreams*, directed by Phil Alden Robinson, featuring Kevin Costner, Amy Madigan, and Gaby Hoffmann (Universal Studios, 1989), 010:02 to 011:05, <https://www.amazon.com/Field-Dreams-Kevin-Costner/dp/B000I9S668>.

mine, call Nashua home, but there are more than 24 family units that attend the church. Most members are not Nashuans.

Christ Presbyterian Church is a small congregation that draws from 9 different towns and cities across Southern New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Our people do not live near one another. Some church members live more than an hour apart. This is not unique to Christ Presbyterian. In our Presbytery, almost every church is a small regional church, drawing people from large distances in Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire. As I talk to Presbyterian colleagues, they have similar struggles. Many churches only have activities on Sunday, as that is when everyone is gathered, and it is too difficult to meet at other times during the week.

To be clear, I am not saying that Sunday morning worship is why we are not doing evangelism or making disciples, or that if we get rid of Sunday morning worship, we will have more time to do evangelism and discipleship. I am simply pointing out that it has been a long-standing practice to prioritize this corporate worship experience at Christ Presbyterian. Many congregations define themselves by the Sunday morning experience. I am not sure that is always a good idea, and it can be a false indicator of if we are healthy. It is my thought that this is a contributing factor as to why we don't make disciples. If we have a good Sunday morning experience, do we need to do anything else?

Struggling to Evangelize

When the surrounding cultures become as negative toward faithful Christianity as they are, we must not forget that we are not the first generation to face such challenges.

– Rico Tice, *Honest Evangelism*

Speak to an ordinary member of a local church and it will not take long to discover that evangelism has an image problem

– Francis Brienon, *Sharing Good News*

In addition to the Sunday morning worship experience, I have three more assumptions about Christ Presbyterian. First, many members of Christ Presbyterian Church lack a boldness and desire to participate in evangelism. Rico Tice in his work, *Honest Evangelism* describes this as the “pain line.” For many Christians living in the Western culture, we hesitate to share our faith for many reasons. Tice suggests that the biggest reason is that we don’t want to get figuratively punched or hurt by others who might reject our faith or witness.⁸ Why take a risk that could affect a friendship or relationship and possibly leave one marginalized and thought of as a fool?

Furthermore, Christians live more and more in a multicultural and secular society, and there are many choices for a person to consider when it comes to faith and practice. This would be true in my context in Nashua, New Hampshire on the edge of Boston. For a Christian to suggest that faith in Jesus Christ is the only way for salvation sounds narrow-minded and ignorant. Few Christians have the determination to challenge secular thinking and to make the case that Jesus is the Messiah. In the book *Sharing Good News*, Stefan Paas writes that the church is seeing the result of living in a postmodern society where the church does not have an advantage as it did in decades and centuries past.⁹ Very few Christians are motivated to evangelize and many lack the passion to share their faith in Jesus Christ in a complicated world. That would be true at Christ Presbyterian Church. I have spoken with church members and have asked people one on one why they hesitate to share their faith. The responses are in line with what Rico Tice as well as Stefan Paas have found. They are concerned about being offensive, they feel that they will be rejected for their convictions, and they lack the confidence and boldness to challenge the prevailing opinion of an ever-changing postmodern world.

8. Rico Tice, 18.

9. Gerrit Noort, Kyriaki Avitzi, Stefan Paas, 40.

Out of Sync and Out of Time

With the invention of the clock, Eternity ceased to serve as the measure and focus of human events. And thus though few would have imagined the connection, the inexorable ticking of the clock may have had more to do with the weakening of God's supremacy than all the treatises produced by the philosophers of the Enlightenment.

– Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

Secondly, I believe that many of the members of Christ Presbyterian simply have no time to be engaged in ministry. This is not simply an issue of bad time management, but rather several factors that contribute to a lack of time. For one, the season of life that many people at Christ Presbyterian find themselves in is very demanding. Many church members are working professionals with demanding careers that come with long work hours. Nashua and the surrounding area acts as a bedroom community to the Boston metro area and very few members both live and work in the Nashua area. Many congregation members commute to work, which means an early morning start followed with a late arrival home during the week. They have little time for small groups, discipleship, or ministries like evangelism and mercy. Their free time is limited to the weekend and then it is reserved for time with family, worship, and any chores that exist around their home. My next-door neighbors leave for work before 5:30 am every weekday morning and get home around 6:30 pm every night. We are an increasing mobile society which makes relationships difficult and opportunities to minister become few and far between.

This then also creates a further problem of engagement. When is it possible to witness to our neighbors? One answer would be that we would be to witness in the workplace. But as several of my leaders have articulated, their coworkers are scattered throughout the region. They may all be in the same place during the work day, but at night they fan out to the various corners of the Boston Metro area. Allison, my spouse, is a perfect example. She works at Boston Logan International

Airport with people from all over the Boston Metro area. Recently they had a retirement party for an employee, and Allison drove over an hour to be at the party. People did not stay long as they all were scattered around the region and were concerned about traffic and getting home late. My point is this, that often who we work with is not who we live with, and vice versa. This makes evangelism and discipleship hard as they are both time intensive, as well as limited by geography.

In addition, we have a lot of families with small children, which is a blessing and is wonderful for our Sunday school program. This also means we have parents that are busy with their children, schools, and their activities and have little energy to engage in ministry. This pace of life and its demands leaves little room for evangelism and discipleship in Nashua where the congregation is centered. Parents have the blessing to be able to disciple their children, and so our young families have discipleship opportunities within their own homes. However, this does not allow them as many occasions to engage in discipleship outside the home. And to add to the challenging circumstances, the neighbors and friends we want to reach are in the same circumstances.

This is more than a time problem; it is a cadence of life that results in being out of rhythm with our fellow Christians and neighbors. I notice a stark contrast in this regard when I go to Haiti. Over the last several years, I have been traveling to Haiti's capital and traveling north to the Artibonite Valley and the small city of Marshand Dessalines. I lead a team to train pastors and work at a local hospital and orphanage. With unreliable electricity, the days are simple. The team sleeps, eats, and works in the same place, and in a short week we become a simple community living and serving together. Each day we end it on the rooftop enjoying the breeze and the stars and chatting about the day. How different this is from my days spent in Nashua, where everyone is running in different directions at different times.

Gone are the days when we were all living and working on a similar schedule. We as a wider society and the church are not just out of time, we are out of sync. We are a bunch of people fighting time and schedules to be a community in a world that worships the individual. This is a major obstacle to evangelism and discipleship.

Difficulty in extending Hospitality

Fellowship in the early Christian Church meant serious commitment, following the one who said that he lay down his life for his friends. Genuine community, then, means being continually, strenuously devoted to one another in the congregation.....Lack of genuine hospitality is the issue: failure to be witnesses to, or lovers of, our neighbors is the problem.

– Marva Dawn, *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God*

Third and last, we struggle to be hospitable to one another. This is both a problem inside and outside the congregation. I grew up in rural Western Pennsylvania in the 1970s and 1980s where a lot of my time was spent going to church with my family. If there was something going on at my parent's United Methodist Church during the week, we were there as a family. Weeknights, weekends, holidays, it did not matter. We were often eating, working and playing at the church. I have very few memories of not being in a church on Sunday morning. I would always assume that if there was something going on at church, we were going to be there as a family. This experience meant that I ate a lot of meals at church and spent a lot of time talking to people who were not my parents. We had a very small youth group, but largely it was an intergenerational experience. I could tell you about the church members I grew up with, where they lived, what they did in the community and what interests or hobbies they enjoyed. I had relationships with them, ate in their homes, and knew what they were excellent at making at church potlucks. It seems quite clear to me that being a

Christian in the late 20th Century in Slippery Rock, PA meant that you were hospitable towards one another, you spent time with one another, and you ate together regularly.

This experience was not unique, and I think many people share a similar upbringing. I hope that there are still places in the 21st century where this is true in North America. However, I am concerned that this has become the exception for most Christians today, and it is difficult to replicate at Christ Presbyterian. This is not a common experience at Christ Presbyterian for what should be by now somewhat understandable reasons. From what I have already shared, we don't have a building, we don't have time and we don't live very close together. How can we be hospitable towards one another when it is virtually impossible to do so?

This assumption is also a factor when it comes to evangelism and discipleship. If we don't have time for one another at CPC, we certainly don't have time for neighbors and friends. The people that we may want to get to know certainly don't have time given the demands of life in Nashua, and so we don't have opportunities to chat and share life together. Sharing life together offers the opportunity to share what is important, like our faith in Jesus Christ. Our lack of hospitality as a church and in our community can and does contribute to a lack of evangelism and discipleship. Allison and I have lived in our neighborhood for over 14 years. I know my neighbors, and we chat when there is time, but it is often limited. Allison and I have made repeated efforts to be hospitable to our neighbors. While it has been appreciated, it is sporadic and difficult to arrange.

Hypothesis

Using my above assumptions, my thesis will explore various obstacles that keep us from doing evangelism and discipleship. How are we hindered our efforts to do discipleship at Christ Presbyterian Church? How do we make changes, and what issues need to be addressed? How do we

move from the status quo to being a disciple making church? This thesis will address the problem of departure from the culture of the church in the 1st century and acceptance of an unhealthy culture that sees making disciples as optional. This unhealthy culture has a lot to do with a preoccupation with the Sunday morning experience. It is then complicated by the lack of boldness in evangelism, not having enough time, and the inability to be hospitable towards one another and the people around us.

My research methodology is to primarily compare Christ Presbyterian with healthy congregations in the 21st Century that are making disciples and engaging non-Christians regularly. They are also challenging some of the very problems and issues that Christ Presbyterian Church faces. It makes sense to do these case studies and reflect on how they are dealing with such issues as a lack of time and hospitality, and how they balance Sunday morning with evangelism and discipleship during the week.

One of the benefits of this doctoral program is that I have been exposed to some wonderful ministries around the world who are facing these challenges. Many of them are much larger than Christ Presbyterian. However, regardless of size, all congregations are called to do the same thing--to be making disciples. In these case studies, we will identify what principles can be learned that can be applied at Christ Presbyterian. Some of these churches are here in North America, while others are overseas. I had considered only looking at congregations that were similar to us--small, located in New England with a similar theological framework. However, I don't see a lot of healthy examples in our context. I also think that this problem requires some revolutionary approaches. Evaluating outreach and discipleship methods from congregations in different circumstances could be useful in our own reflection on changing the culture of our unhealthy church. I believe that the culture of a congregation is the key.

My hypothesis then is simple. There are healthy disciple making and evangelism churches in existence that are facing similar challenges, and there is a culture to them that can be researched and defined. These congregations have addressed the issue of time as well as hospitality that is lacking at Christ Presbyterian. The cultures in these disciple making churches are more like church in the first century than the current culture of Christ Presbyterian. It is then my hope that Christ Presbyterian can make changes based on what is learned of the cultures of these congregations that are making disciples and reaching their neighbors with the gospel. My hope is that Christ Presbyterian, too, would become a healthy disciple making church in the 21st Century.

Chapter 2 is a theological reflection looking to the Scriptures for a foundation of how to be a congregation that makes disciples. Obviously, there is much to glean from the gospels themselves and Jesus' life and ministry. I will look at Jesus and his ministry, as well as culture, hospitality, and discipleship. I will also examine the first century church and how it dealt with being in a secular culture like the Roman Empire. How was it effective in evangelism when today in our culture we feel so ineffective and concerned about sharing our faith in Jesus? How did the early church address hospitality, time, and discipleship? Did the early church prioritize Sunday morning or was it one aspect of the life of the early church? In addition, I will not limit my scope by only looking at the New Testament. I will examine examples in the Old Testament, particularly of how God's people lived in Babylon and elsewhere in a post exile world, a world that was sometimes hostile towards the things of God as well as multicultural. How did God's people engage their neighbors and friends who worshipped idols and came from other cultures? Life in Egypt, life in the wilderness, life in a post exile world will be useful as we reflect on what it means to be the people of God in the 21st century.

In chapter 3, a literature review will cover how others have tried to address the problems that Christ Presbyterian is facing today. I will explore hospitality, creating a culture of discipleship, as well

as making changes that are lasting and lead to long term solutions. Over the last three years during my time reading for the doctoral work, I have come across some thought-provoking examples of how to be better at making disciples in the local church. Some of these works have really engaged me as they were frustrated with some of the very concerns I have expressed.

A theology of culture, time, and hospitality will also need to be addressed. Niebuhr's work *Christ and Culture* will be used as a foundation for how we are to be engaged in evangelism and discipleship. There are works on hospitality that need to be explored as well. This section will draw upon works that were covered in my previous years during the doctoral program as well as new works that will address issues related to Christ Presbyterian.

Chapter 4 focuses on several case studies of congregations who are committed to making disciples. As mentioned, none of the case studies are here in New England. They are a diverse group of churches, which will provide interesting perspectives.

Antioch Church in Waco has reduced its footprint on Sundays, doing the minimum and focusing on midweek discipleship. Kwanglim Methodist Church in Seoul is the on other extreme, making Sunday a major focus where church members spend time. Additionally, they incorporate discipleship into worship. Life Christian Foundation in South Africa is a regional church much like Christ Presbyterian drawing from a large area and for many years never having a building. Richmond Hill Chinese Christian Church has used hospitality and culture to engage non-Christians in evangelism and discipleship. Central Presbyterian Church in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil is a congregation trying to reach young people with the gospel. Brazil and South Africa are not so much in a post Christian culture setting but are making changes as they are trying to address evangelism and discipleship with younger people.

Finally, chapter 5 includes conclusions and some practical steps, gleaned from the research, for Christ Presbyterian to take to become a disciple making church. The goal of this project is to use the case studies in part to develop concrete steps to address evangelism and discipleship in Nashua.

Conclusion

My hope is to avoid assumptions and not make excuses. I plan to turn over every rock in order to come to some concrete steps to help Christ Presbyterian. As participants in this doctoral program, we are called to be passionate, reflective practitioners. It is a very good description of the work I am hoping to accomplish in this project. This project is personal, and reminds me of what is important, what to celebrate, and what to be hopeful about in moving forward. Christ Presbyterian is not a project or experiment; it is God's work in which I have been invited to participate. I should be passionate about it! I also want to reflect on how we got to where we are today, and how to change it. Lastly, the project is practical, we are not just to reflect on what we have learned, but to think through real steps. I hope this will move the congregation of Christ Presbyterian towards a better practice of evangelism and discipleship, that we may indeed become a disciple making church.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Another of the disciples said to him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” And Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”

- Matthew 8:21-22

Introduction

Recently I preached through a sermon series on the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew, like the rest of the gospels, addresses discipleship. Dr. Rikk Watts, my New Testament professor at Regent College in Vancouver, Canada referred to the Gospel of Matthew as a discipleship manual.¹ With this perspective in mind, Matthew is the ideal starting place to understand discipleship—both how it functions as well as why people may refuse discipleship. Not everyone who Jesus interacted with decided to follow him as his disciple.

In chapter 8 of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is approached by various individuals who want to be his disciple. In verses 21 and 22, it appears that Jesus is harsh in his response to the person who came to him and asked if he could bury his father first before following Jesus. At first reading, the delay in the discipleship request seems reasonable. In the ancient Near East culture, it was customary to bury someone within 24 hours. Is Jesus that impatient? William Barclay, a Scottish New Testament scholar, offers this explanation in his commentary:

1. Rikki E. Watts, *New Testament Foundations* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 2002).

There was a Syrian Missionary who had befriended an intelligent and rich young Turk. They met in Europe. The missionary advised the Turkish man to make a Tour of Europe at the close of his education, so that his education would be completed and his mind broaden. The Turk answered, "I must first of all bury my father." The missionary expressed his sympathy and sorrow that the young man's father had died. But the young Turk explained that his father was still very much alive, and that what he meant was that he must fulfill all his duties to his parents and to his relatives, before he could leave them to go on the suggested tour, that, in fact, he could not leave home until after his father's death, which might not happen for many years.²

I think William Barclay is on to something. If we consider this example of the young Turk, it is very possible that the person who said to Jesus, "I need to bury my father first" is telling Jesus the same thing. Essentially he is saying, "I need to fulfill my duties to my earthly father and sometime in the future, I don't know when, I will follow you, I will be your disciple." The young man is telling Jesus that discipleship is going to have to wait until he takes care of his family obligations. This explains Jesus's words in other passages where he addresses this issue of fulfilling obligations to family before following him:

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?"³

We begin this chapter with the understanding that being a disciple of Jesus has never been easy and requires a strong commitment from the one who wants to follow Jesus. Discipleship will have obstacles and reasons why we will not follow Jesus. Even Jesus, while doing ministry and making disciples, experienced rejection when it came to following him! There will always be reasons to not

2. William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible Series, The Gospel of Matthew Volume 1* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 314-15.

3. Luke 14:25-28 (English Standard Version).

be a disciple and/or to not make disciples of Jesus. Both are rife with challenges. Since the arrival of Jesus in Roman Palestine and his calling of his first disciples along the Sea of Galilee, discipleship requires a person's utter and complete devotion.

These passages in Matthew and Luke remind us that there will be obstacles to discipleship, the very issue we are trying to address at Christ Presbyterian. Obstacles to sharing one's faith as well as making disciples have been a factor in the church since Jesus issued the Great Commission in Matthew 28. Some obstacles remain the same, while others have changed over time and culture.

In this chapter, I will do a theological reflection looking to the scriptures as a foundation for my thesis-project. I will start by looking at how central it was that Jesus was a disciple maker and the expectation of his followers to make disciples as well. Obviously, there is much to glean from the Gospels themselves and Jesus' life and ministry. We will also look at the rest of the New Testament and how it exhorts the church to evangelize and make disciples.

After making clear that evangelism and discipleship are always to be central to the church, we will look at other obstacles to discipleship. In our context, Sunday morning worship experience has become the priority and discipleship has been relegated to one of several ministries of the church. There are examples in the Old Testament of God's people making worship man-centered and neglecting what it means to be a follower of God. This was a problem in the Old Testament era as well as a problem in the New Testament period.

After we have examined that obstacle, we will move on to other obstacles to discipleship and evangelism. Were there problems in the Old Testament and New Testament concerning a lack of boldness and courage in sharing one's faith in God? Was there a difficulty in engaging others with the gospel message in a multicultural world? I think we will find there are a lot of examples of God's people struggling to share their faith and relate to others who have different backgrounds. At the

same time, we will also see role models of God's people being bold in their faith in a diverse world. In addition, we will look at examples in the Old Testament, particularly of how God's people lived in Babylon and elsewhere in a post exile world--a multicultural world that was sometimes hostile towards the things of God. How did God's people engage their neighbors and friends who worshipped idols and came from other cultures? The Israelites' life in Egypt, life in the wilderness, and life in a post exile world will be useful as we reflect on what it means to be the people of God in the 21st century.

We will then examine the first century church and how it dealt with being in a secular culture like the Roman Empire. The book of Acts is a resource on the early church's boldness in their faith in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. The Apostle Paul exhorted the church to be bold and to have courage in proclaiming the gospel.

Lastly, we will do a biblical study of hospitality. This might be the most important aspect of our examination of the scriptures. Again we will not limit ourselves to just the Gospels or the New Testament, but we will go back to Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament and consider what the scriptures say on how we are to be hospitable to one another and to those around us. Whether we have considered this or not, hospitality plays a key role in discipleship and evangelism. I hope we will be able to see that more clearly as we read through the scriptures.

Discipleship Was Jesus' Directive to the Church

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

- Matthew 28:18-20

Throughout my doctoral program research, any book on discipleship I read almost always started the same regardless of the author. A beginning chapter always focused on Jesus and his disciples to give biblical evidence that discipleship matters. If I am focused on discipleship at Christ Presbyterian, I need to first look at Jesus emphasis' on discipleship.

As mentioned, if the Gospel of Matthew is a discipleship manual as Dr. Watts suggests, then it is a good place to reflect on its importance. As soon as Jesus was baptized and began his public ministry, he did not go out by himself. He called men to be his disciples. "While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him."⁴

Jesus' ministry as outlined in Matthew consisted of preaching, teaching and healing, which his disciples witnessed and later on duplicated in their own ministries. Soon after Jesus called the first disciples, we see clearly his 3-fold ministry. "And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people."⁵

Beginning in chapter 4 to the end of the chapter 9, we see Jesus and his disciples traveling throughout Galilee and doing exactly what was described in Matthew 4:23. So while Jesus is ministering throughout Galilee, the disciples see him preach, teach and heal everywhere they go. They are disciples following the master and observing all that he is doing in his ministry. The entire section in Matthew ends with a repeat of the same statement made in Matthew 4:23. "And Jesus

4. Matt 4:18-20 (ESV).

5. Matt 4:23.

went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.”⁶

After Jesus had crisscrossed the region of Galilee, Matthew makes it clear that Jesus alone has been doing the ministry with his disciples witnessing from chapter 4 all the way to chapter 9. At the end of chapter 9, Jesus says the following to his disciples: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”⁷

Jesus tells his disciples that the need is greater than one man, and others will be needed to help in the ministry of teaching, preaching and healing. Not surprisingly in the very next chapter, Jesus commissions his disciples to do at least two of the three primary ministry elements of preaching and healing. “And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.... And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons.”⁸

It is quite clear that discipleship is vital to the work and ministry of Jesus. It could be argued based on what Jesus says at the end of chapter 9 that discipleship is the engine that keeps the ministry of Jesus moving forward. When we get to the end of Matthew, Jesus makes clear again that discipleship is central to his work. In Matthew 28, we have these words from Jesus:

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and

6. Matt 9:35.

7. Matt 9:37-38.

8. Matt 10:1, 7-8.

of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”⁹

Discipleship is not just to be utilized by Jesus, but is to be used by his followers throughout all generations. Jesus tells his disciples to make disciples. Jesus’ disciples then carry out the ministry of healing, preaching and teaching. This method, this directive from Jesus, is not just for those who walked with him while he was here on earth, but for every person who calls themselves a follower of Jesus Christ.

Early Church, the Apostle Paul and Discipleship

It certainly seems that Jesus uses discipleship to fulfill his purposes and ministry. He also instructs his disciples to continue discipleship based on Matthew 28, what is now known as the Great Commission. But what about the witness of the scriptures in the early church? What about the Apostle Paul who wrote most of the New Testament books? Does the Apostle Paul also call the church to be disciple-makers? Does discipleship fuel the early church and its rapid expansion across the Roman Empire?

In the book of Acts, the Apostle Peter is doing exactly what Jesus was doing in his ministry. Peter has a preaching ministry, a healing ministry and a teaching ministry. In Acts 2, Peter preaches at Pentecost. In chapter 3, Peter heals a person who from birth was unable to walk. In chapter 4 Peter and John stand before the council in Jerusalem and teach those who were religious authorities and leaders. They were so shocked by his preaching and teaching that it is recorded in Acts 4:13.

9. Matt 28:16-20.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.”¹⁰

So Peter is doing the ministry of preaching, teaching and healing, and he is making disciples. In Acts chapter 6, it says this about the activity of the early apostle: “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.”¹¹ Discipleship was very much a part of the work of the early church. Jesus’ disciples were making disciples, and the church was growing and expanding.

When we look at the testimony of the Apostle Paul, discipleship is also very much a part of his ministry. Not long after Paul’s conversion, Acts 9:19 records he was with the disciples in Damascus. These are not the apostles; these are followers of Jesus in Damascus. Later Paul did travel to Jerusalem and met Jesus’ disciples who were understandably nervous about meeting the former persecutor of the church. In Acts 9 we have this observation about discipleship:

And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.¹²

These verses demonstrate that the identity of Jesus’ true followers is that of a disciple. In these verses the apostles are trying to determine if Saul’s (later Paul) conversion is authentic by determining if he is a disciple. At this time in the scriptures, discipleship is still going strong amongst the church, and Paul’s identity is tied to being a disciple of Jesus. Paul is doing one of the things all disciples do, preaching the gospel; thus, they determine that Paul is a disciple of Jesus. My point here

10. Acts 4:13.

11. Acts 6:7.

12. Acts 9:26-28.

is that Paul knew and understood the importance of discipleship, and that those who follow Jesus are a part of the discipleship process.

We can also see in Acts, as well as in other letters, that Paul participated in the Great Commission. Timothy, Titus and Philemon are men who Paul disciplined. Note how he speaks about them in the New Testament:

To Timothy, my true child in the faith¹³

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.¹⁴

To Titus, my true child in a common faith...This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.¹⁵

Paul's relationship with these men is more than emotional and sentimental. The language used by Paul is that of a family relationship, father and son. This communicates a very close bond that comes through what I believe is a discipleship relationship. Jesus referred to His own disciples as brothers; therefore, it is not surprising that Paul views his disciples as spiritual children.

Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."¹⁶

Finally, Paul speaks about the process of discipleship in his letter to the Colossians. It is clear in this passage that Paul affirms that a follower of Jesus grows in his or her faith and that this is done through discipleship. "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom,

13. 1 Tim 1:2.

14. 2 Tim 2:2.

15. Titus 1:4-5.

16. Matt 28:10.

that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.”¹⁷

I think there is enough evidence to see that discipleship was the engine to Jesus’ ministry and that his followers and those who led the early church understood that as well. We are to expand the Kingdom of God on earth through the ministry of healing, preaching and teaching. The Great Commission is a call to discipleship so that we take the ministry of Jesus to the ends of the earth.

In reality, discipleship often encounters various obstacles. This was true in Jesus’ day as we have already covered in this chapter. We will see that discipleship faced problems in the early church as well. This is apparent in Paul’s writing, particularly when the early church got sidetracked and neglected the ministry of Jesus and the important work of making disciples. I would argue further that being a follower of God has had obstacles that existed long before the New Testament era. There are many Old Testament examples that demonstrate that a follower of God, a disciple of Jesus, will face challenges.

The Corruption of Worship Versus Following God in the Old Testament

And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

- Amos 7:12-13

But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.

- First Corinthians 11:17

17. Col 1:28-29.

As I begin this section on corporate worship and discipleship, I need to make two comments. First, I feel the need again to emphasize that worship and discipleship should not be in conflict with one another. God's people are called to corporate worship, and that is a good thing. Christians are called to make disciples as it is made clear by Jesus life and ministry. However, it seems that from the very beginning of time, worship of God becomes a self-justification activity and the measuring stick God's people use to determine that they are okay with God. God's people go to the temple, they make offerings, and they take worship away from being focused on God and instead make it focused on themselves. They neglect other aspects of their faith like caring for the poor or seeking justice for the oppressed. The sense is that as long as they are worshipping God in some fashion, they are doing what is required. Unfortunately, worship practices become the primary activity of God's people, and they begin to neglect what it means to be an obedient follower of God.

Secondly, as we look at Amos, Micah and Isaiah in the Old Testament, it is important to remember that these are examples of an extreme nature. God's people drifted far from what He called them to do, that he sent prophets to war them of their practices and lack of obedience. The circumstances at Christ Presbyterian are not that dire. The hope is that these prophets will serve as a warning to us to be obedient to God in worship and in practice.

In the book of Amos, we see this quite clearly articulated by the 8th century prophet. Worship had become man focused and they were neglecting what it meant to be obedient followers of God. While at Regent College, I took a course by Dr. Dave Diewert on the Book of Amos, and from that class the book of Amos became my favorite Old Testament book. Amos is a prophet that I have long felt had a pulse on the very problem I am facing today.

In 765-760 B.C.E. which was the time period when Amos was ministering, things were good in the land of Israel. People were prospering and making money, and there were no wars with other

nations. It was a time of peace, and for some, a time of prosperity, and it showed in the way that they lived. Amos makes reference to the wealth of some of the Israelites in Amos chapter 6.

Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory
and stretch themselves out on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock
and calves from the midst of the stall,
⁵ who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp
and like David invent for themselves instruments of music,
⁶ who drink wine in bowls
and anoint themselves with the finest oils.¹⁸

So other than the “woe” that begins the passage, life sounds good for the inhabitants of Samaria. Inventing musical instruments and eating and drinking without any worries sounds like an ideal time in the Northern Kingdom. Well, unfortunately not everyone is enjoying ivory couches and drinking wine from bowls. As we read on in Amos, we learn of many who are adversely effected by the wealth and prosperity of others. Amos’s ministry is focused on the lack of obedience by some of God’s people and how that hurts those who are less fortunate. Following are three passages that highlight that the group of God’s people who are prospering are harming their brothers and sisters in the faith.

Thus says the Lord:
“For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—
those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth
and turn aside the way of the afflicted;
a man and his father go in to the same girl,
so that my holy name is profaned;¹⁹

They hate him who reproves in the gate,
and they abhor him who speaks the truth.
Therefore because you trample on the poor

18. Amos 6:4-6.

19. Amos 2:6-7.

and you exact taxes of grain from him,
you have built houses of hewn stone,
but you shall not dwell in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards,
but you shall not drink their wine.²⁰

Hear this, you who trample on the needy
and bring the poor of the land to an end,
saying, "When will the new moon be over,
that we may sell grain?
And the Sabbath,
that we may offer wheat for sale,
that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great
and deal deceitfully with false balances,
that we may buy the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals
and sell the chaff of the wheat?"
The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
"Surely I will never forget any of their deeds."²¹

It seems clear why Amos was sent to the Northern Kingdom. The wealthy of the nation of Israel are ignoring God's statutes. Instead of caring for the poor, they are cheating them for their own gain. This was unfortunately a common occurrence; God sent several prophets to address the neglect of those who were unjustly treated. So what does this have to do with our topic? Let us read on in Amos as I think he identifies the problem. How can God's people treat their own people with such malice and contempt? Would they not find correction when they go to worship God at Bethel, the center of worship in the Northern Kingdom? When God's people were at the foot of Mount Sinai, they trembled and were terrified in the presence of God. What then does their worship look like in the time of Amos?

Those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth
and turn aside the way of the afflicted;
a man and his father go in to the same girl,

20. Amos 5:10-11.

21. Amos 8:4-7.

so that my holy name is profaned;
they lay themselves down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge,
and in the house of their God they drink
the wine of those who have been fined.²²

Amongst the evil practices of God's people, Amos addresses how they worship God. The worship of the people is completely centered on themselves and their lifestyle. God is not the object of their worship. They are living sinful lives and then going to Bethel for their enjoyment. They are eating and drinking in the house of God. Their worship has become corrupted rather than God centered. Reading further in Amos:

That on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions,
I will punish the altars of Bethel,
and the horns of the altar shall be cut off
and fall to the ground.²³

Why would God send such judgment on Bethel? Bethel was the high place where people from the Northern Kingdom went to worship God. It is because God's people are gathering at this holy place for their benefit and not to glorify God in their lives. They are doing evil in the marketplace but then on Sabbath they are worshipping God at Bethel. So for this reason, God does not want them to continue to worship Him at Bethel given how they are doing evil the other six days of the week. Amos 5 shows the extent of how much God detests this duplicity amongst His followers.

But do not seek Bethel,
and do not enter into Gilgal
or cross over to Beersheba;
for Gilgal shall surely go into exile,
and Bethel shall come to nothing."
"I hate, I despise your feasts,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

22. Amos 2:6-8.

23. Amos 3:14.

Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the peace offerings of your fattened animals,
I will not look upon them.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
to the melody of your harps I will not listen.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.²⁴

In this final passage, Amos makes very clear that God rejects the worship of his people while they disobey the law of God. They are guilty of evil practices, making worship about themselves and thinking that if they show up at Bethel, or Gilgal or Beersheba, they are doing what is required. God does not want their presence in the places of the worship if the worship is about themselves and they ignore God's law.

My point in looking at these passages in Amos is to demonstrate that God's people have had a tendency to make worship man-centered. They are making the experience of going to Bethel about what they want. They dine and drink in the presence of God while ignoring his statutes. How are they able to do this? By making the experience of worship man-centered.

Sadly, Amos is not the only prophet who had to address this problem. In the book of Micah, God addresses the duplicity of man again like he did in the book of Amos. In Micah they are being generous in their worship of God, but again are ignoring the far more practical steps of being God's people who live by His law. In Micah 6, God is upset with their conduct, and says:

With what shall I come before the Lord,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"
He has told you, O man, what is good;

24. Amos 5:5, 21-24.

and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?²⁵

God loves a generous person, but not one that is ignoring what it means to be the people of God. If we give generously to the church or to the purposes of God, but ignore what it means to live as a follower of Christ, we are continuing in our man-centered ways. God wants to be worshipped by people who no longer live for themselves, but live for him in obedience, humility, justice and mercy.

In the book of Isaiah chapter 58, the subject is fasting. Fasting is a form of worship that sounds like something that is noble. Surely these people of God are worshipping him correctly? However, it seems they are worshipping God for their own demands.

Why have we fasted, and you see it not?
Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?
Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,
and oppress all your workers.
Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.
Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.²⁶

God sees through the motives of their fasting. They are seeking their own pleasures and gains. They are seeking to worship God while at the same time getting what they want in the way of money. They fast so they can fight, quarrel and do evil. The point of this paragraph in Isaiah is that they worship for their own interests. Their worship is man focused and man-centered.

I think it is clear, then, that the people of God in the Old Testament took the weekly activity of worshipping God, and made it into something that was man-centered. In Amos, worship became about eating and drinking. In Micah, their generous offerings were about covering their

25. Mic 6:6-8.

26. Isa 58:3-4.

transgressions. Their worship was about themselves and the ability to get away with evil, like the indulgences issued by the Vatican in Rome. Worship was for their benefit, not God's glory. And in the case of Isaiah, fasting became another way to get what they wanted, to be able to do evil and to seek their own pleasure. Worship was man-centered and a means to an end in their pursuit of their own interests. Man-centered worship was a problem in the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament.

Human-Centered Worship in Corinth

I had the privilege of taking a course on First Corinthians with Dr. Gordon Fee while attending Regent College. Dr. Fee is an expert on the Apostle Paul, and the class was incredibly insightful into the problems of the church in Corinth. One of the themes in the first letter to the Corinthians was their man-centered worship.

The Apostle Paul was addressing divisions in the church in his letter. Ironically, it is in regard to discipleship. Some church members associated with Apollos, some with Cephas and others Paul. They were announcing whose disciple they consider themselves. Paul makes clear they are all disciples of Jesus first and foremost.

In chapter 11 of the Corinthian epistle, Paul addresses divisions in the church when they come together. I think we can assume that when they are coming together as a church, it is for worship. "But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you."²⁷

27. 1 Cor 11:17-18.

The divisions spoken about in chapter 11 are more along social economic lines. When the congregation gets together to celebrate the Lord's Supper there is a problem. Some come to feast while allowing those who have little to go hungry. We read on in chapter 11 of First Corinthians:

When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.²⁸

What is evident is not only wealthy church members' insensitivity to the poorer members, but that worship itself has become man-centered. Like the wealthy in the time of Amos, worship has become for their own enjoyment. Sadly, this is not the only problem in their corporate worship experience.

In chapter 14 Paul addresses the topic of corporate worship again. This time the problem is in regard to people who want to speak in tongues. Their motivation, it seems, is for personal experiences and not for the benefit of the community, leading Paul to instruct:

"So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church."²⁹

Furthermore, Paul remarks that when they are together, they are not orderly in their worship, but disorderly as people are having their own individual spiritual experiences. "Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say 'Amen' to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up."³⁰

28. 1 Cor 11:20-22.

29. 1 Cor 14:11.

30. 1 Cor 14:16-17.

Paul is addressing the problem that people attending corporate worship are doing so for their own personal spiritual experiences. They are not gathering together to build one another up, but rather to showcase their spiritual vitality to those around them. The circumstances are so bad that the corporate worship experience is chaotic and unhelpful to visitors. For person was new to the faith or one who had not yet professed Christ, the worship service would be confusing. Later in chapter 14, Paul addresses the Corinthian church about the humanization of corporate worship, saying:

Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.³¹

The Corinthian's worship experience is focused on what a person gets out of it, not for the benefit of the community, nor for those who are new to the faith or for those who yet do not know Christ. Paul is instructing them that this must change.

As we have seen in several instances throughout scripture, corporate worship can be corrupted into something it is not meant to be. Corporate worship is not supposed to be an obstacle towards discipleship and evangelism. Yet in the instance of the Corinthians, we see that the worship experience became just that. We should take heed and consider how the worship service and discipleship and evangelism are interconnected, and in doing so, consider the former's impact on the latter.

31. 1 Cor 14:22-26.

Struggles in Engaging with Others

As mentioned in chapter 1, there are many obstacles today to being faithful in evangelism and discipleship. When we go out the door, the world is a diverse place with different worldviews, and we find it difficult to share our faith. We often lack boldness, and courage to share Jesus in a multicultural world. Our generation is not the first to face this problem. In fact, if we examine the scriptures more closely, we will see that God's followers have often had to live in a multicultural setting both in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament eras.

Boldness & Courage in an Old Testament multicultural context

It might surprise many North American Christians to realize that much of what we see in the Old Testament is a group of people trying to be followers of God in a multicultural world. Much of the history of God's people was not spent in the Promised Land, but rather in other nations like Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia. Furthermore, when they did live in the Promised Land, they frequently had interactions with neighboring nations. Particularly in North America, we have a heritage where the Christian faith has been part of our foundation. But for God's people, that has rarely been the case considering the centuries of oppression and exile that we see in the Old Testament. It would take pages and pages to cover every setting in which the people of God wrestled with their faith surrounded by others who had a completely different worldview. From the time that Abram was called in the book of Genesis to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, God's people have had to figure out how to be God's people when everyone around them was different. We will look at just a few examples of boldness and courage in the Old Testament.

Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron

The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years, on that very day, all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.

- Exodus 12:40-41

The United States of America is 244 years old, and there is a lot of history to be accounted for in two and a half centuries. No matter how long that seems, we are 186 years short of the time that the people of God spent in the land of Egypt. When we finally get to the end of their time in Egypt, we have the person of Moses. Moses was one of Abraham's descendants but was raised in an Egyptian household. When he was an adult, he lived in Midian and married into the culture while being an exile for many years. Moses lived in a multicultural world from the day he was born until the day he died in the Sinai wilderness.

Often when it comes to reflecting on Moses' life, we tend to see him as a reluctant leader. Someone who is was called by God for a purpose who comes up with reasons not to go to Egypt. When God speaks to Moses in the wilderness, we see Moses' hesitation:

"Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, "Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do."³²

So, in that moment of weakness we cast Moses as someone who is not bold or courageous in the faith. However, the rest of the book of Exodus suggests otherwise. Moses is given a companion for the mission, his brother Aaron. Moses and Aaron do this together, something else that is often

32. Exod 4:13-15.

missed when looking at the story of the flight from Egypt. Note how these brothers demonstrate boldness and courage in the face of Pharaoh:

Afterward Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.’”³³

Moses and Aaron did so; they did just as the Lord commanded them. Moses and Aaron did as the Lord commanded. In the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants.³⁴

So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, “Thus says the Lord, the God of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me?’³⁵

Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh.³⁶

Moses and Aaron demonstrate boldness and courage in a foreign land. They demonstrate to Pharaoh and everyone in Egypt that God is in control, and he holds the universe in his hands. It was not an easy assignment, but they were called to live out their faith before an unbelieving world.

Joshua

Be strong and courageous

- Joshua 1:6

The biblical character of Joshua is one that sees the transition of God’s people from being former Egyptian slaves wandering in the wilderness to settlers in the Promised Land. That land was occupied by different people groups. This means that under Joshua’s leadership, they interacted with

33. Exod 5:1.

34. Exod 7:6, 20.

35. Exod 10:3.

36. Exod 11:10.

a lot of different people groups. Some interactions with other nations was good, some were hostile and unwilling to yield, like in the case of the battle of Jericho. We won't look at all of those interactions, but rather what God said to Joshua before he led the Israelites to Jericho and engaged other nations.

In the book of Joshua chapter 1, God makes a speech to Joshua and three times God repeats the phrase, "be strong and courageous."

Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."³⁷

Joshua then repeats this phrase to the Israelites later on in the same chapter:

"Be strong and courageous."³⁸

It would seem given what we read in the opening chapter of Joshua that boldness and courage are part of what it means to be a person of faith. Maybe we need to see them not as exceptions, but as expectations that God has for his people as we live in a diverse world.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

So far our examples, Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, have been prior to the occupation of the Promised Land. The post exile period is a treasure trove of examples of God's people in a

37. Josh 1:6-9.

38. Josh 1:18.

multicultural setting. Again we could look at a lot of examples, but we will look at three examples during the time period when the Babylonian and then Persian Empire dominated the region.

The most famous trio in the Old Testament has to be Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and what we know about them is all found in chapter 1 and chapter 3 of the book of Daniel. We know they were contemporaries of Daniel, and as documented in Daniel chapter 1, were in the same group of young men who were carried from Jerusalem to Babylon. They, like Daniel, chose not to defile themselves with the food that was sacrificed to idols. They, like Daniel, were living out their faith in the Babylonian world, a world that had no roots in their beliefs. They were followers of God living in a pagan, multicultural setting.

This led to a confrontation in Daniel chapter 3 that has to be one of the most exciting and climactic scenes in the Old Testament. These three Hebrew men were defying the King, and would not bow and worship him. Given one last chance to do so under threat of death by being thrown into a fiery furnace, these men utter one of the boldest and bravest declarations in the Old Testament:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."³⁹

For many, it is a real debate which is the bolder action--saying what they said to King Nebuchadnezzar, or their defiance in being willing to be thrown into the furnace. It is an incredible moment for God's people to reflect on, a moment that demonstrates great boldness and courage. We are then delighted as readers to see the miraculous work of God to save these bold individuals.

39. Dan 3:16-18.

Esther

Esther is an example of someone who goes through a transformation on this subject of boldness. In Esther 1-2, we see a compliant young women doing what is asked of her by her uncle as well as others. She seems to have no will of her own and is simply portrayed as a beautiful woman who wins the hearts of men, including the King of Persia.

It is then not until chapter 4 that she is forced into a circumstance where she must become courageous, even bold. Understandably, she was hesitant, as indicated in the narrative. She wants to help, but lacks the courage and boldness. Her Uncle Mordecai offers her these words of advice that have become famous, particularly the last phrase: “Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, ‘Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’”⁴⁰

This counsel to Esther inspires her to action. Sometimes the next verses are overshadowed by the iconic phrase in verse 14, but note Esther’s determination in a multicultural court to fight on behalf of people of faith: “Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, ‘Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.’”⁴¹

40. Esther 4:13-14.

41. Esther 4:15-16.

Esther in chapter 4 is now a person of courage, a person who is willing to be bold for the sake of her faith. It is the reason she is such an encouragement to those who know her story--the story of how a Hebrew woman in a Persian court could have an impact on a multicultural world.

I could share more examples from Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah about boldness in a post exile world, but I think the point is made well enough. God's people whether in Egypt, Babylon, or Persia were called to be bold in their faith in a place that was not in agreement with their faith and worldview.

Boldness and Courage in a Multicultural World in the New Testament

After the ascension of Jesus Christ, the book of Acts testifies to the impact of the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. As the gospel spread in the first century, God's people demonstrated a boldness and courage in their faith. Whether they were in the courts of Jerusalem, or standing in the shadow of the Greek and Roman temples, Christians were bold in their declaration of Jesus Christ.

Earlier in the chapter, I mentioned two disciples, Peter and John, who appeared before a court in Jerusalem and were released afterwards and shared their experience with the rest of the early followers of Jesus. The other followers' response in regards to the testimony of Peter and John was to praise God and ask for boldness. Listen to their convictions in Acts chapter 4:

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.⁴²

42. Acts 4:29-31.

This prayer for boldness defines the rest of the book of Acts. In the book of Acts, there are numerous examples of various Christians being bold in their testimony concerning Jesus. Stephen's bold speech in chapter 7 results in the scattering of God's people beyond the Promised Land. In chapter 9 after the conversion of Saul, Barnabas introduces him to other believers in Jerusalem. Saul has gone from a persecutor, to a proclaimer of the gospel and note how his preaching is described: "But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord."⁴³

We know that Paul's boldness did not diminish; rather, Paul's ministry was regularly described as bold as we see in chapter 14's account of Paul's ministry in the city of Iconium: "So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands."⁴⁴

In Acts 19, Paul was in Ephesus, and his preaching again is described as being bold. Note that Paul's efforts were not short term, but for a period of two years. It is easy to think that Paul preached one sermon boldly and then moved on to another location. This passage also demonstrates that Paul was not only bold, but discerning in his preaching:

And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.⁴⁵

43. Acts 9:27-28.

44. Acts 14:3.

45. Acts 19:8-10.

Lastly, just as the book begins with the Christians praying for boldness, the book ends just as we might expect. The last verse of Acts characterizes Paul's ministry in Rome stating, "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."⁴⁶

The book of Acts demonstrates that Christians in the early church felt their calling in evangelism and discipleship required them to be bold in the Mediterranean world. This is further underlined by Paul's constant exhortations in his letters to the church.

Since we have such a hope, we are very bold.⁴⁷

This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.⁴⁸

And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much bolder to speak the word without fear.⁴⁹

I don't think it is an overstatement to suggest that in order to overcome various obstacles to sharing Jesus in a multicultural world, we as Christians will need to be bold. I think there is ample evidence in the Old Testament and New Testament that followers of God will at times need to be bold in their proclamation. Faithful followers of God throughout history have had to deal with all sorts of cultural concerns, just as we do today. Considering these passages from Scripture, the church

46. Acts 28:31.

47. 2 Cor 3:12.

48. Eph 3:11-13.

49. Phil 1:14.

in the 21st century should take steps to be more courageous in our proclamation of the person of Jesus.

Hospitality, Evangelism and Discipleship

The last topic to cover is hospitality and its connection to evangelism and discipleship. That might seem like an odd pairing, but the scriptural evidence says otherwise. A key component to both evangelism and discipleship is sharing your life with another person and this sharing of life is a central component to hospitality.

We will look at the evidence of hospitality being important in evangelism and discipleship as we look at the New Testament. Hospitality as an aspect of the faith was something that existed in the very beginning in the book of Genesis. In chapter 18 of Genesis, we have this fascinating meeting under the oak trees of Mamre with Abraham:

He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." ⁶ And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.⁵⁰

What is quite noticeable about Abraham's behavior is how hard he works at being hospitable to his guests. It is more than a social obligation but rather a way to communicate an intimacy as well as honor and respect. You would not have your enemies join you for a meal, but you would extend an invitation to those who you care for and respect. As we see in this passage, Abraham works hard

50. Gen 18:2-8.

to make sure his visitors are taken care of and fed. This passage points to the importance of hospitality during the Patriarchal period.

When reading the Old Testament, it is evident that meals were a big part of the Jewish calendar. The most important meal was the Passover meal. The Passover meal that was inaugurated in Exodus chapter 12 is a communal event that requires hospitality. Listen to God's instructions to Moses in Exodus Chapter 12:

Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb.⁵¹

In God's instructions, he makes room for hospitality. In order to accommodate smaller families, God calls neighbors to share the lamb. Such instances as neighbors sharing the Passover meal together necessitates hospitality. Furthermore, the meal is sacred and special. It is an intimate experience and not to be entered into casually. Like that meal served by Abraham, the Passover is a meal that demonstrates a bond, a relationship. This is underlined by what God says later in the same chapter:

And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you."⁵²

In this section God makes provisions for those who are enslaved and those who are strangers that sojourn with the family. They can be included provided they take certain steps.

51. Exod 12:3-4.

52. Exod 12:43-49.

The point I want to make is that there was an attempt to accommodate and to include people who were members of the faith community and who lived as a part of God's people. There was a degree of hospitality, a desire to include others, even strangers and slaves in this sacred meal. In Jesus' ministry in the four Gospels, hospitality was seen alongside evangelism and discipleship. Jesus was not just preaching, healing and teaching; he was with God's people. His name Emmanuel, meaning God is with us is, shows God's desire to be close and personal. Jesus was fellowshiping and eating with his disciples and those were or would become his followers. He identified with them in a very personal way. In our day and age, a teacher and student have a very different relationship than Jesus had with his disciples. Hospitality is, to a degree, a sharing of lives, a gathering to eat together and to share in fellowship.

I have found it interesting that the religious leaders of the day often found it offensive that Jesus simply ate and spent time with people they deemed as sinners or unclean. Of course they also did not like his teaching, preaching and healing, but it was his time in meals that they singled out as particularly problematic. Take for instance Jesus calling the tax collector Matthew. Look what follows in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 9:

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."⁵³

53. Matt 9:9-13.

Matthew receives Jesus, and invites his friends. His friends are enjoying his hospitality and the presence of Jesus. Jesus is delighted, he is identifying with them simply by being in the same house and eating with them. Jesus' ministry is one of hospitality.

In Luke's gospel, we have a similar example with another tax collector, Zacchaeus.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."⁵⁴

I think it is important to note the similarities in both accounts. Both men are tax collectors, and have homes that are suitable for hosting. In both stories, those who witness Jesus going to the home of the tax collector are unhappy. In both cases, we are seeing evangelism and discipleship taking place in the context of hospitality. Jesus says in regards to Matthew, "I came to save sinners. I am at Matthew's house because these people need salvation. My eating and drinking with them is tied up with my mission." In Luke, Jesus says that salvation has come to this house after Zacchaeus' confession to repent from his ways. By inviting himself to Zacchaeus' house and honoring him by being his guest, we see Jesus transform Zacchaeus from a despised tax collector into his follower. I believe Jesus deliberately went into their homes to signify friendship and acceptance.

Jesus' ministry had aspects of hospitality, and it was his followers who encouraged the early church to be hospitable to one another as well as strangers. The Apostle Peter says this in his first letter: "The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of

54. Luke 19:5-10.

your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”⁵⁵

As evidenced by these verses, Peter expects the church to love and show hospitality to one another and to look after the interests of those who were a part of the household of faith. This should not surprise us, the early church from the very beginning showed hospitality as a result of the gospel. Luke records in the book of Acts that in the early days, the church in Jerusalem was hospitable towards one another. In Acts chapter 2, Luke writes: “And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.”⁵⁶

The early church was not just gathering one day a week, but were together continually. Gathering in each other’s homes, eating together, giving as they could, showing concern for one another, they lived in vibrant community. Even after the years had passed, the Apostle Paul encourages believers towards hospitality. In the book of Romans, Paul writes: “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”⁵⁷

When we look at some of the other exhortations on the list, we are not surprised and would say they are important in regards to the conduct of a believer. Abhor what is evil, love one another,

55. 1Pet 4:7-9.

56. Acts 2:44-46.

57. Rom 12:9-13.

do not be slothful, serve the Lord and so on and so forth. I find that the church today takes seriously those aspects of Christian life. Yet, I am not sure we as the church today feel it is important to be engaged in hospitality. Why does that often look optional in the life of believers?

Lastly, and I think this speaks strongly to the importance of hospitality in the early church, Paul lists hospitality as an important criterion for choosing church leaders. Paul writes, “Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.”⁵⁸ Hospitality comes before “able to teach,” a quality that we naturally associate with elders and leaders. While verse 2 includes several characteristics that we expect to see in an elder or leader, for some reason, though hospitality is listed, it is not one we often view as an important trait for a leader. Yet, there it is amongst teaching, respectable, sober minded and self-controlled. I think the witness of the New Testament makes it clear that a Christian is to be a person who is hospitable for the sake of the Gospel.

Conclusion

What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

- Ecclesiastes 1:9

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Living in New England and having opportunities to travel have both reminded me on many occasions that what we often need to do to be effective is to look back. We need to look at scripture and the witness of history and to see that there are answers to our problems today. This chapter lays a foundation for answering the questions raised in chapter 1. It is my sincere

58. 1Tim 3:2.

hope that the scriptures reflected on in this chapter will enable me and the church to consider what it means to be engaged in evangelism and discipleship in the 21st Century.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

When embarking on a thesis-project like this, it is important to remember something I learned in my first year of this Doctor of Ministry program. And that is that there is a significant difference between a revival and a renewal. A revival is something one has no control over, but renewal work is something one is called as a Christian to do. In my first reflection paper, I looked very closely at revivals and renewal movements and the various authors who wrote about them.

Robert Coleman defined revival as “to wake up and live.”¹ A revival is more than a personal blessing,² but rather turning something back to its true nature and purpose.³ Collin Hansen and John Woodbridge use Habakkuk 3:2 to define revival as “to bring back to life”⁴ and in the Greek, “to live again.”⁵ In *A God-Sized Vision*, the authors quote J.I. Packer who defines revival further, “Revival is a social, corporate thing, touching and transforming communities, large and small.”⁶ Keith Hardman

1. Timothy Beougher and Lyle Dorsett, *Accounts of a Campus Revival* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 13.

2. Beougher & Dorsett, 15.

3. Beougher & Dorsett, 14.

4. Collin Hansen and John Woodbridge, *A God-Sized Vision: Revival Stories that Stretch and Stir* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 20.

5. Hansen & Woodbridge, 26.

6. Hansen & Woodbridge, 35.

writes, “Revival or awakening may be defined as the restoration of God’s people after a period of indifference and decline.”⁷ Revival indeed does just that; it brings new life into a dead situation.

However, these definitions are insufficient as they don’t answer an important question. Who is the agent that brings revival? Is it man made, or is it heaven sent? The answer comes from America’s greatest theologian, Jonathan Edwards, a man who has documented a revival in his congregation and community. Edwards wrote a treatise⁸ on revival in an effort to defend what happened in Northampton during the Great Awakening. Edwards identifies five distinguishing marks of revival. First, a revival exalts Christ, his life and his work. Second, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are lessened, and people begin to earnestly seek after righteousness. Third, a revival produces a greater regard for Scripture. Fourth, a revival leads people to what is true. Finally, a revival produces a love for God and a love for man.⁹ Like previous definitions, Edwards focuses on the effects of the revival on man. He goes on to say in his work, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God*, that God was sovereign over the awakening in Northampton. Some people were received by God, while others were rejected. God bestowed mercy on some, while others He condemned.¹⁰ This is an important point when it comes to the topic of revival, and it has serious implications. It means God is sovereign over all aspects of a revival--who, when, what and how.

7. Keith J. Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing: Evangelism and Revivals in America* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 16.

8. Jonathan Edwards, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God Applied to that Uncommon Operation that has Lately Appeared on the Minds of the People of New England with a Particular Consideration of the Extraordinary Circumstance with which this Work was Attended*. (R. Smith, at the Gilt-Bible, 1742).

9. Garth Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 25.

10. John E. Smith, Harry S. Stout, and Kenneth P. Minkema, *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 74.

Jonathan Edwards felt that a revival was a sovereign work of God. It could not be manufactured or made to happen by man's efforts. Although it may seem contrary to that theological conviction, Edwards also felt that praying for revival was worthwhile. He was an admirer of the Scottish Concerts of Prayer and advocated that congregations should pray for revival.¹¹ Praying for revival was something that was observed in the account of the Wheaton College Revival in 1995. Dr. Beougher made a similar observation looking historically at revivals, and then seeing it first hand at Wheaton when his class prayed for revival on campus.¹²

It is important to define renewal as well as explore the differences between renewal and revival. What does a renewal in the congregation look like compared to a revival? Of all the works I have read, Richard Lovelace's *Dynamics of the Spiritual Life* was most revealing on the topic of renewal. He devotes large sections of his work to the topic. He approaches renewal from a corporate standpoint. He addresses primarily the renewal of the congregation. Renewal can be both corporate and personal. Robert Coleman, David Platt and Francis Chan mostly talk about personal renewal. Of course, they hope it will have an impact on the church, but their strategy is addressing the individual rather than a larger community. Renewal can be both corporate and personal.

The need for renewal is similar to revival. Revival is an extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. A renewal movement uses faithful individuals and the ordinary means of grace to bring about change in a ministry or congregation that is for the advancement of God's Kingdom. Faithfully reading God's word, praying, engaging in evangelism and discipleship can often bring a renewed spirit into the life of the congregation. Revival would be great and we can pray for that to

11. Hansen & Woodbridge, 32.

12. Beougher & Dorsett, 86, 89, 99.

happen, but we can also faithfully use what God has given us in an effort to bring reformation or renewal. Both are a work of God; revival is extraordinary, where renewal is usually more ordinary.

I can pray for revival, but I can't manufacture it. It is an extraordinary work of God. Christ Presbyterian could always use a revival, but that is up to God in His providence. What I am hoping to accomplish through this thesis and its subsequent application is renewal. If this paper helps bring renewal to Christ Presbyterian or another ministry, that would be a tremendous blessing.

In the most general sense, renewal is needed at Christ Presbyterian Church. So before we look at literature on outreach and discipleship, works on renewal need to be included as well. In this chapter, we will look at some renewal movements that have focused on evangelism and discipleship. Over the last three years during my time reading for doctoral work, I have come across some thought-provoking examples of how to be better at making disciples in the local church. Some of these works have really engaged me as they were frustrated with some of the very concerns I have expressed.

Hospitality has emerged as a topic that should be addressed. We have seen a biblical foundation for it, now we will look to some respected authors on the subject. Lastly, a theology of culture needs to be expounded. Niebuhr's work *Christ and Culture* will be used as a foundation for how we are to be engaged in evangelism and discipleship. This chapter draws upon works that were covered in my previous years during the doctoral program as well as new works that address issues related to Christ Presbyterian.

Renewal Movements that Focus on Evangelism and Discipleship

In this section I will start by looking at renewal movements based on the work of George Hunter III, Robert Coleman and Richard Lovelace. Dr. Coleman's approach is more geared to the individual, while Hunter and Lovelace are speaking to the corporate aspect of the church.

Dr. Coleman's book is obviously about evangelism and discipleship. It is based on the work of Christ himself in making disciples.¹³ I also think Coleman is giving us a road map to the renewal of the church. Coleman's concern for the Christian is that they return to the basics and commit their life to follow Christ. In his book he writes, "It would appear that the teachings of Christ upon self-denial and dedication have been replaced by a sort of respectable "do as you please" philosophy of expediency."¹⁴ He continues, "His way was His life. And so it must be with His followers."¹⁵ Coleman's solution to the renewal of the church is simple, live and do what Jesus showed us in the gospels.

George Hunter's perspective on renewal is a radical call to change on how we reach non-Christians. But he is calling for a paradigm shift if we are going to be the church in the 21st Century. Hunter is calling for us to drop our Roman approach to evangelism, and adopt a Celtic way of Evangelism.¹⁶ This will fundamentally change everything in the church, and will hopefully bring a renewal to the church as a whole. Hunter's argument is that we need to adopt Saint Patrick's approach to evangelism in Ireland. Unfortunately the majority of the church has adopted a Roman

13. Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1963), 33.

14. Coleman, 60.

15. Coleman, 71.

16. George Hunter III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West...Again* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010), 30.

model that requires the unchurched to be civilized, educated, and then brought into the church.¹⁷

The Celtic model encourages relationships, discussion, and going to the unchurched and caring for them in their community.¹⁸ This is over simplified, but I think you can understand Hunter's concern with the church today. He sees the need to adopt the Celtic approach if we hope to win people to Christ in the West today.

The supreme key to reaching the West again, is the key that Patrick discovered-involuntary but providentially. The gulf between church people and unchurched people is vast, but if we pay the price to understand the unchurched, we will usually know what to say and what to do. If they know and feel that we understand them, by the tens of millions they will risk opening their hearts to God who understands them.¹⁹

Richard Lovelace is not presenting a paradigm shift or a strategy when it comes to renewal. He knows we need it, but he addresses pragmatic issues to help with renewal. Lovelace looks at the church theologically, historically and socially, and I have found his insights most helpful. Lovelace looks at various renewal movements in the church before the Reformation, like the emergence of 14th century Mysticism.²⁰ He also characterizes the Great Awakening in the United States as a renewal of the church.²¹ It began to plant the idea in my head that revivals could be a part of a wider renewal of the church.

He continues to explore renewal by talking about cycles of renewal first seen in the Scriptures. One place the cycles of renewal are most easily seen is in the book of Judges.²² This pattern

17. Hunter III, 42.

18. Hunter III, 43.

19. Hunter III, 130.

20. Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979), 33.

21. Lovelace, 35.

22. Lovelace, 63.

continues into the church today, even though we have experienced a new reality in Pentecost and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.²³ The church is always in need of renewal. He favors renewing established congregations, rather than beginning new ones and letting older congregations die out.²⁴ One of the important tools the church is given for renewal is preaching. Lovelace writes, “God’s mercy, patience and love must be fully preached in the church. But they are not credible unless they are presented in tension with God’s infinite power, complete and sovereign control of the universe, holiness, and righteousness.”²⁵ Preaching, along with teaching solid theology with an emphasis that we will have victory over the darkness, helps in the renewal process.²⁶ He also suggests a vigorous counseling program to help those who are in need of spiritual direction.²⁷

Coleman is trying to keep it simple; Hunter is wanting to see a paradigm shift if we have any hope to be useful in the 21st century and Lovelace wants us to see the bigger picture. The church has been in renewal essentially since it was born. We need to use the means of grace God has given the church and use them effectively. I don’t necessarily think that these men are in conflict with one another; I think they would all agree discipleship and evangelism are essential to the church. I personally find Lovelace’s holistic approach most compelling and accessible. Hunter’s desire for a new world order in the church will be hard to implement, and Coleman’s call to make disciples is something that is in step with what Lovelace advocates for renewal.

23. Lovelace, 72.

24. Lovelace, 208.

25. Lovelace, 84.

26. Lovelace, 133.

27. Lovelace, 216.

Two additional books that address renewal movements in the 21st Century context are *Radical* by David Platt and *Crazy Love* by Francis Chan. David Platt's subtitle makes it clear we are talking about renewal, "*Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream.*" Platt's primary concern is that the American church has largely turned its back on Jesus.²⁸ Platt writes, "The dangerous assumption we unknowingly accept in the American dream is that our greatest asset is our own ability."²⁹ Platt continues, "I am concerned that all of us--pastors and church members in our culture--have blindly embraced an American dream mentality that emphasizes our abilities and exalts our names in the ways we do church."³⁰ What Platt is describing is what I have addressed before, man centered worship and ministry.

Platt embarked on a bold experiment to bring renewal to his congregation, he started what he called "Secret Church" which met on Friday Nights for 6 hours to study God's word and pray.³¹ He then called individuals to follow a 5-step plan for renewal. The five steps are to pray for the world, read God's Word from beginning to end, sacrifice your money for Jesus, spend time in a cross-cultural context and commit your life to make disciples.³²

Francis Chan is also calling for renewal, but his approach is more relational than Platt's missional approach. Chan was in a similar situation as Platt, pastoring a large church but in Simi Valley, California. He also wanted to see renewal at his church, writing, "This book is written for

28. David Platt, *Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2010), 19.

29. Platt, 46.

30. Platt, 49.

31. Platt, 27.

32. Platt, 108.

those who want more Jesus. It is for those who are bored with what American Christianity offers.”³³

It is interesting that like Platt he is addressing American Christianity, but he is taking a different approach. In his book, Chan calls individuals to consider who God is,³⁴ the seriousness of sin,³⁵ and the need to repent, and to live a life that glorifies God.³⁶ He shares various stories of people who have done that and are living lives sold out for Christ.³⁷ Both Chan and Platt see the prosperity of America as a real threat to the church. Renewal means to follow Christ, not money.

It is obvious that renewal is needed in most, if not all churches at some time, and Christ Presbyterian is no exception. What it means to do evangelism and discipleship is a part of the renewal process in a congregation. Therefore, we will look at those a bit more closely as we think about renewal in the church.

Evangelism and Discipleship Defined

As is expected, we all gravitate towards various authors and experts on important theological topics. For discipleship, Robert Coleman is the person I most admire and respect. His focus on principles and looking at Jesus’ ministry is simple and profound. Since we have already mentioned Coleman in this chapter, I will look at some additional authors on the subject of discipleship. In

33. Francis Chan, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2009. Kindle edition), 19.

34. Chan, 25.

35. Chan, 32.

36. Chan, 60.

37. Chan, 158.

regards to evangelism, it would have to be Rico Tice and his mentor, John Chapman, whom I admire.

We will first begin by looking at the subject of evangelism.

Dr. Packer's work set the tone for this topic of evangelism. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* is a well titled book. We tend to see these theological topics in opposition rather than working together.³⁸ Packer addresses the common assumption that we need to have the mindset that it is all up to us to convert people to Christ in his book. Some Christians argue that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is actually a hindrance to evangelism.³⁹ I have wondered privately myself being a Presbyterian minister if this mindset is actually working against our efforts. It is easy to become complacent in our need to share Christ.

The theological complication Packer addresses has to do with the apparent antinomy between human responsibility and God's sovereignty.⁴⁰ I have dealt with this in the context of own ministry and was anxious to see what my former professor from Regent College had to say. Packer writes that our finite minds cannot comprehend both truths, and we need to accept that the Word of God testifies that we are morally responsible as well as under the sovereignty of God.⁴¹ I admit I was disappointed by the answer Packer gave, I was hoping for something more substantial. That being said, Packer made what I thought was a significant observation that holding to both truths is very important to the Christian life.⁴² We must remember that God is in control in all circumstances as

38. J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 14.

39. Packer, 14

40. Packer, 27.

41. Packer, 28.

42. Packer, 39.

well live out our responsibility to walk in obedience to Christ. If the church would hold to those two truths, it would be glorious.

As I finished Packer's book, I began to see a connection to what John Chapman wrote on evangelism in his writings. Packer mentions that the gospel message must teach people about the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴³ John "Chappo" Chapman, the Australian Anglican evangelist of the 20th century could not agree more. John Chapman is someone I had never heard of before and was introduced to by Rico Tice of All Souls Anglican Church in London. In preparing to interview Rico Tice in 2017, Rico recommended I read his mentor, Chapman, who wrote two works on the subject of evangelism. In the work, *Know and Tell the Gospel*, Chapman makes the same point as Packer. "The gospel neither has its origins in humanity nor does it have its content in humanity. The gospel is *not* about humanity and its needs, although there are not unimportant nor are they unrelated. The gospel is about the Son. It's about Jesus. If I am not speaking about Jesus, God's unique Son, then I am not preaching God's gospel."⁴⁴

To do effective evangelism, Chapman argues that you must be devoted to the Word of God. You must preach from it when sharing the gospel.⁴⁵ You also need to be a servant of the Word of God, submitting to its authority and preaching only its truth. Chapman writes that too often evangelists form something of their own message, and it no longer has its roots in the truth of God's Word.⁴⁶

43. Packer, 49.

44. John Chapman, *Know and Tell the Gospel* (New Malden, Surrey, UK: The Good Book Company, 1998), 18.

45. John Chapman, *Setting Hearts on Fire* (Kingsford, NSW, Australia: St. Matthais Press Ltd, 1999), 14.

46. Chapman, *Setting Hearts on Fire*, 25.

Chapman makes clear that the only correct response to the gospel is repentance and faith.⁴⁷ He notes that this response is seldom preached today. Evangelists would rather use less offensive language like “open your heart and let Jesus in” or “let Jesus come in and cleanse you from your sin.”⁴⁸ The danger of this softer approach is that it allows for people to have misunderstandings of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. As Chapman puts it, our churches are graveyards of people who let Jesus in to their hearts but have not repented and come to terms with the Lordship of Christ.⁴⁹ The Lordship of Christ is central to Chapman’s gospel message compared to many evangelists that emphasize that Jesus is our Savior. Chapman’s primary concern in doing evangelism is to introduce people to Jesus, who is both Lord and Savior, particularly emphasizing the lordship and authority of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰

In my interview with Rico Tice, he shared that John Chapman felt 2nd Corinthians best communicates the message of the gospel. I confirmed that when I read Chapman’s writings because he mentions the importance of this book of the Bible⁵¹ in telling the gospel. Not completely surprising, Rico does that same thing in his work, *Honest Evangelism*.⁵² *Honest Evangelism* is a continuation of Chapman’s theology and methodology in regard to evangelism and it is highly practical.

47. Chapman, *Know and Tell the Gospel*, 24.

48. Chapman, 24

49. Chapman, 25.

50. Chapman, *Know and Tell the Gospel*, 35.

51. Chapman, *Setting Hearts on Fire*, 31.

52. Rico Tice, *Honest Evangelism* (New Malden, Surrey, UK: The Good Book Company, 2015), 54.

Like Chapman, Rico Tice feels we are not honest enough about the cost of following Christ and unwilling to cross a pain line to share the gospel.⁵³ Rico's addresses crossing the pain line throughout his book and why we should all be active in sharing our faith. What is refreshing about Rico's approach is that he clarifies our motivation to share the gospel and what we are called to do as Christians.⁵⁴ We are called to bear witness to Jesus and leave the results of whether they decide to follow Jesus up to God. The doctrine of the sovereignty of God influences this evangelist's approach like his predecessor John Chapman. A common thread in the resources I have read on evangelism is that we have a responsibility to share yet do so with the peace and assurance that God is in control.

Discipleship has the same problem as evangelism in the 21st century, it is a neglected aspect of the Christian faith. Christian education in the local church offers programs and books but these often replace one on one discipleship experiences. Even worse, I would suspect that most Christians would say they have never been discipled. They simply came to faith in Jesus and began to go to church. This I think describes many people's experience in the church today--discipleship lost.

James Houston touches upon this in his book the *Mentored Life*. Instead of being discipled by Jesus, we as a wider culture have turned to various philosophies, psychologists and therapists to navigate this life.⁵⁵ We see value in secular methods of managing our lives and have even mixed Christian values with secular approaches.⁵⁶

53. Tice, 15.

54. Tice, 25.

55. James Houston, *The Mentored Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 15.

56. Houston, 48.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer would agree with Houston. As a follower of Christ, we live in the reality of cheap grace rather than costly grace.⁵⁷ The Christian tries to live in the world and in doing so, compromises his or her relationship with Jesus. Like Houston, Bonhoeffer saw more conformity to the world's methods rather than obedience and commitment to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the church in the middle of the 20th century.⁵⁸

Ajith Fernando focuses on the rise of Post-Modern thought when it comes to discipleship.⁵⁹ He remarks that when he travels to the USA he is surprised by the way Americans respond to sermons by remarking that they “enjoyed the sermon.” Is that the purpose of a sermon? Is it not to exhort, convict and train up the congregation in righteousness? How have we shifted in our thinking that Sunday morning worship is about our enjoyment?⁶⁰

The concern I think all of these men have is singular. Christians in the 20th century and early 21st century are not being discipled by Jesus in the same way as previous generations. By focusing on enjoyment, relying on cheap grace and embracing secular means for guidance, we have become what George Whitefield titled one of his famous sermons--“the almost Christian.” The almost Christian is someone who thinks he is a follower of Jesus but there are serious concerns in his obedience and commitment to Jesus Christ.⁶¹

57. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: A Touchtone Book Simon & Schuster, 1995), 45.

58. Bonhoeffer, 57.

59. Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 21.

60. Fernando, 23.

61. Sheldon B. Quincer, ed., *Whitefield's Sermon Outlines* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 116.

So, what do these men have to say on discipleship? How should we correct our current trajectory away from the Lordship of Christ? We will begin with Dr. Houston, who turns to Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish Christian philosopher.

Kierkegaard argues that Christian mentoring and discipleship need to have at their foundation an actualized personal encounter with Jesus Christ.⁶² Dogma and doctrine won't do it; one needs to have an experience with the Lord Jesus. Kierkegaard was not anti-intellectual, but rather emphasized the relationship with Jesus over the knowledge.⁶³ He also encouraged time in the Word, and that the only way to know oneself is to know God.⁶⁴

Houston takes this one step further in regard to discipleship. If we are his disciples, then we should identify with him.⁶⁵ And by drawing close, we are ultimately mentored by Jesus Christ. It was this realization that brought me to the conviction in graduate school that we are all primarily disciplined by Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

I think Bonhoeffer is saying the same thing, but he is using the language of obedience and submission to the word of God. When the disciples were first called by Jesus, it was obedience, not knowledge, that made them follow Him.⁶⁶ We have made Christianity about knowing, when we should be talking about obedience.⁶⁷ A disciple is one who is obedient to the master, who has an

62. Houston, 89.

63. Houston, 89.

64. Houston, 95.

65. Houston, 119.

66. Bonhoeffer, 57.

67. Bonhoeffer, 81.

exclusive attachment to that person.⁶⁸ A Christian faith based first on single minded obedience should be the way of discipleship. Obedience to Christ, not the pursuit of knowledge, is the mark of a disciple.⁶⁹

In reflection, I have come to this conclusion on discipleship. Instead of obedience to Jesus' command in Matthew 28 to go and make disciples, we have tried to replace the Great Commission with a different command. We are not to go make disciples, but rather know of Jesus and if practical, tell others about our faith. Discipleship has been replaced with the pursuit of knowledge. Going to worship on Sunday, sitting in a Sunday School class, joining a small group is for the purpose of gaining knowledge. We pursue knowledge of God, and if we feel it is useful to someone else, we will tell them. I believe that is what discipleship and evangelism look like today in many churches.

Paradigm Shifts Towards Evangelism and Discipleship in the 21st Century

Earlier under the Renewal section of this chapter, I wrote that the paradigm shift that George Hunter was advocating is simply not practical. I may agree with his assessment, but it would be a major undertaking to change the culture of a local church to reflect that of Celtic Christianity under the leadership of Saint Patrick. That said, I do think some radical steps need to be taken, and I have benefited greatly by visiting some relevant churches that are committed to evangelism and discipleship. There are four authors that illustrate well that a paradigm shift is needed and can be accomplished because they are doing just that in the 21st Century. Drew Steadman at Antioch Waco,

68. Bonhoeffer, 59.

69. Bonhoeffer, 81.

Neil Hudson from Great Britain and Colin Marshall and Tony Payne from Australia all are advocates of a shift in how we do discipleship.

In 2018 I visited Antioch Church in Waco, Texas. I was warmly welcomed by Drew Steadman, who is on staff at Antioch. He assisted me in interviews as well as helped me get an idea of what Antioch is all about. Drew Steadman's *Go Make Disciples* begins like every other book I have read on discipleship. It looks at the life of Jesus and give several definitions of what the process of discipleship should look like. It is clear the book is a primer for the ministries of Antioch which are engaged in making disciples, so it makes sense that it is written in a format to help with the discipleship ministries at Antioch. My favorite reflection in the book is in a subsection that Steadman titles "Personal Moses." This section covers the tendency of small group leaders or disciple leaders to act as emissaries from God to those whom they disciple. Like a guru or sage in other cultures, a personal Moses becomes the primary way in which younger Christians relate to God. So members of the small group or disciples seek out the counsel of their small group leader or mentor repeatedly instead of praying or turning to Scripture⁷⁰ In addition to this problem, Steadman also talks about the importance of being friends in a small group, but not becoming a de facto counselor.⁷¹ It is understandable that a discipler and a disciple would grow close, but it is important to be careful not to abuse that relationship and to teach them to be mentored and disciplined primarily by Jesus.

At the end of Steadman's book, he talks about the need to change the culture of the church. He does not give any details, but in speaking to him personally I know this is the real need for churches to get back to discipleship. We need to change the culture. The next two works address the

70. Drew Steadman, *Go Make Disciples: Embrace Jesus's last words as your main calling*. (Brentwood, TN: Clear Day Publishing, 2016), 74.

71. Drew Steadman, 75.

need for a cultural change to make discipleship central to the church. *The Vine Project* is written from an Australian perspective as well as a global perspective. *Imagine Church* is written from a parish perspective in the British Isles. Both books address the need to make a cultural shift in the way churches do discipleship in the twenty first century.

Earlier in this chapter I referenced Dietrich Bonhoeffer's work, *Cost of Discipleship*. Neil Hudson's book *Imagine Church* is very much a sequel to Bonhoeffer's work. Hudson provides concrete steps on how to bring the church back to making discipleship central. Hudson even quotes Bonhoeffer, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."⁷² What I appreciated about his book as well as *The Vine Project* that we can't simply make program changes and expect that everything will be corrected. Hudson spends most of his time outlining a 6-step process to move a congregation towards whole life disciples.⁷³ Those 6 steps, which I won't take time to elaborate on, address cultural issues rather than program shortcomings. Only one step, making one-degree shifts, addresses program needs. The rest of the steps are about vision, relationships and encouraging people in their testimonies and their efforts that discipleship is important. These six steps focus on how the church can live life together and be the people of God.⁷⁴ *Imagine Church* addresses the culture of a church as well as the heart of people that fill the pews.

The Vine Project is a follow up to *The Trellis and the Vine* that came out in 2013 and was an international hit which was a real surprise to the authors.⁷⁵ Since writing *The Trellis and the Vine* they

72. Neil Hudson, *Imagine Church: Releasing Whole-Life Disciples*. (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 24.

73. Neil Hudson, 86.

74. Neil Hudson, 20.

75. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne. *The Vine Project: Shaping your Ministry Culture around Disciple-making*. (Sydney, Australia: Matthias Media, 2016), 14.

have had many people ask the same question: “How do I change my congregation to a church that has a discipleship making culture. You have structures, the trellis, and then the power of the Spirit, the vine.”⁷⁶ And it is the pastor’s function to help make sure that the trellis helps, not hurts the Vine.

The Vine Project seeks to provide concrete steps in order to change the culture of a congregation. In comparison to *Imagine Church*, *The Vine Project* is a much more detailed resource on the subject of changing systems and culture of a congregation. Both are good resources, but *The Vine Project* gives straightforward ideas and resources that can be downloaded from a website or taken from the book.⁷⁷ Instead of six steps as found in the *Imagine Church* model, the writers of The Vine Project have five phases to help a church achieve a discipleship making culture.⁷⁸ I won’t go into detail here but there are similarities and differences. One of the differences that I think is significant is how they suggest you begin. *Imagine Church* begins with casting vision and defining it for your congregation.⁷⁹ *The Vine Project* begins with five convictions from the Scriptures that build a foundation for why a church is making the changes. The rationale is to use the Bible to convict and clarify what the church is supposed to be doing. Why make disciples? What is a disciple? How are disciples made? Who makes disciples? Where to make disciples?⁸⁰ This approach is easy to follow and is laid out nicely in chapters to help a pastor share with a congregation. I find this approach quite useful.

76. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, 30.

77. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, 19.

78. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, 38.

79. Neil Hudson, 86.

80. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, 45.

Throughout *The Vine Project* they share many testimonies of churches who have followed their counsel and have either run into trouble or success. Towards the end of the book they give several examples of how various congregations were able to move their congregations towards a discipleship making culture.⁸¹ *The Vine Project*, compared to all the books I have read on discipleship, most closely aligns with my vision both for my thesis and my local congregation.

Final Thoughts on Discipleship

The last book in the category of discipleship was the most personal for me. *Fulfilling the Great Commission in the Twenty First Century* was written in honor of Dr. Robert Coleman. The book is written mostly by former students of Dr. Coleman and many of them recounted what kind of impact Clem had on them. Reading their reflections made me aware of how much Dr. Coleman has had an impact on me. One writer, Stephen Rankin captures the sentiment perfectly when he writes, “In retrospect, I can see Dr. Coleman’s imprint in my feeling that very tension. The time spent at his feet had forever ruined me for doing anything in the ministry, academic or pastoral, in a conventional way.”⁸² I could not agree more with that sentiment.

Two chapters particularly stood out to me. Timothy Beougher’s chapter on character was convicting to say the least. If you want to be useful in evangelism, your walk with Christ needs to be subject to Jesus.⁸³ Living under various convictions such as the Bible as an ultimate authority are not

81. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, 289.

82. Lyle W. Dorsett and Ajith Fernando. *Fulfilling the Great Commission in the Twenty-First Century*. (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2015), 127.

83. Lyle W. Dorsett and Ajith Fernando, 42.

popular in today's culture. However, they are not optional, but necessary in order for the Christian to be effective in evangelism.⁸⁴

Stephen Rankin's chapter on young people today was inspiring and insightful. I have not read much on the topics of emerging adults and engaging today's university students.⁸⁵ I read this chapter with great enthusiasm and appreciate Rankin's testimony of how to be a discipleship maker while being a faculty member at a small Christian university.

As I close this section, it would be wrong not to highlight an important truth in this literature review. Prior to this doctoral program, my knowledge on renewal, evangelism and discipleship was limited. I am very grateful for the opportunity to read these works. They made me aware again how much I was lacking in my ministry and the benefit of reading continually. This is only a small sample of the works in this program that have had a profound effect on me. I am thankful for the thousands of pages I read and reflected on in regards outreach and discipleship.

The Importance of Hospitality

Hospitality in the Bible is not entertaining. It is enlarging and extending ourselves just as we enlarge and extend our tables. Hospitality without the inner stretching of the heart becomes that inferior product called entertainment.

- Bruce Waltke, *Genesis, A Commentary*

Prior to this doctoral program, I had a very superficial understanding of hospitality. Basically I pictured people who enjoy entertaining people and are good at cooking up delicious food. That is hardly a definition of hospitality that is portrayed in the Scriptures. In chapter 2 we looked at the

84. Lyle W. Dorsett and Ajith Fernando, 43.

85. Lyle W. Dorsett and Ajith Fernando, 124.

biblical evidence, and now we will look at three authors who have given some thought to this topic. I have been blessed to have read *Strangers in the Kingdom* by Rupen Das and Brent Hammoud, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* by Joshua W. Jipp and Miroslav Volf's work *Exclusion and Embrace*.

I first encountered Miroslav Volf when I was at Regent College as a graduate student, and he was a guest lecturer in one of my classes. Coming from a region that has known war, Volf has seen humanity at its worse and has thought through what the Scriptures have to say about what it means to love your neighbor. Miroslav Volf's book is not exactly about hospitality, but it is about concepts related to the topic. The language of being a child of Abraham and Paul's words to the early church about embracing one other make it clear that the people of God are to be people who care for one another and others.⁸⁶ The term "embrace" communicates that we are to love others and have open arms to those around us. Hospitality, in one sense, is the opening of our lives to those around us even if they are different from us.

Volf goes on and writes that many of the sins we commit against our neighbor are acts of exclusion.⁸⁷ Exclusion is in some ways the opposite of hospitality and the concept of embracing others. Exclusion has found its way into the church through pagan ideas as well as our own worries about self-preservation.⁸⁸ Some might argue that there is a third option, that we remain neutral in caring for others like refugees and migrants. Volf argues that is not an option for the Christian.⁸⁹

In the book *Strangers in the Kingdom*, we see that as embrace is a part of hospitality so is belonging or feeling safe and settled. Human beings throughout history have traveled and migrated

86. Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace, A Theological Exploration of Identify, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2019), 34.

87. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 66.

88. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 62

89. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 205.

to new places. We have people groups who have been labeled as nomads or gypsies. There are countless examples of people groups moving for one reason or another, often because of circumstances that are not good. In the Scriptures there is this beautiful picture of an eternal home, a security that will last forever.⁹⁰ Associated with eternal life are images of security and hospitality such as banquet, a fortified city, a mountain. These are all places where God will take care of us and we will be provided with everything we need. God cares tremendously about hospitality so much so that he himself is providing the ultimate place for us for us to be at home and to rest.

Given the hostility of the world, the church must demonstrate hospitality and care. The church has done that for centuries, opening their doors to various people groups. If we are not hospitable towards one another, we are losing our identity as the church.

This then is the real point of the last book in this group by Joshua Jipp. In his work, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, Jipp elevates the importance of hospitality in the church. The title is intentional; we in the Protestant tradition have emphasized saved by faith as an important theological emphasis. Jipp argues that hospitality, like saved by faith, is an important component in the Christian faith.⁹¹ As noted in chapter 2, we can see numerous examples of hospitality being a key element in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. Leaders were expected to be hospitable. Jipp argues that we have neglected this aspect of the faith and need to regain it for the sake of the Gospel.⁹²

90. Rupen Das & Brent Hamoud, *Strangers in the Kingdom, Ministering to Refugees, Migrants, and the Stateless* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2017), 60.

91. Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmanns Publishing Company, 2017), 3.

92. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 12.

Jipp goes on to write that God is the ultimate provider of hospitality as described in the New Testament. Given that Jipp is a New Testament professor, he examines what Luke, Paul and John have to say on the subject of hospitality.⁹³ God expects then that we embody those same characteristics. For me, what was most convicting truth in this book was his observation of the ancient world and how early Christians were different. Prior to the church, health care was not seen as a public concern.⁹⁴ Individuals and families dealt with health problems on their own. It was in the early centuries where Christians cared for the sick and vulnerable through various plagues and epidemics. The concept of hospitals, which shares its origins with hospitality, came from the church. It had never occurred to me that that health care as a public concern did not exist at one time in history. It was not until the church was born that we see one group of people caring for another and doing so through creating poor houses and later hospitals that would care for the sick and vulnerable.⁹⁵

I think these authors make a strong case that hospitality, as reflected in caring for others, is fundamental to the Christian faith. It is unacceptable for Christians to exclude people and care only of their own interests. God has shown us something different, and the revelation of Scripture tells us that we need to elevate the importance of hospitality in the church today.

Theology of Culture

Some books prove to be foundational in one's worldview and development as a believer. For me, one of those books is Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture*. I first read the book while studying at Grove City College and later at Regent College for my Master of Divinity. As I finish this chapter, it

93. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 96.

94. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 120.

95. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, 120.

seems wise to consider evaluating the culture that surrounds us at Christ Presbyterian and in doing so, to reference this book.

In Niebuhr's work, he references five views of culture. The first is Christ against culture.⁹⁶ This view holds that Jesus is the solo authority in one's life, the world is evil, and we must resist. Men like Tertullian⁹⁷ of the early church and Tolstoy⁹⁸ championed this view. We need to be ready to radically be opposed to the world around us. I was briefly a minister in the Mennonite tradition in the Midwest, and this was their perspective.⁹⁹ The second view is Christ of culture.¹⁰⁰ This is the view that Christianity is not that different from the surrounding world. Such a view gives rise to cultural Christian and can be seen in Protestant liberals¹⁰¹ as well as early church Gnostics.¹⁰² In some ways this is the opposite of the first view. Christ against culture sees nothing good from the world. Christ of culture says that the culture of the world does not conflict with the doctrines of the Christian faith.

96. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks, 1975), 45.

97. H. Richard Niebuhr, 51.

98. H. Richard Niebuhr, 57.

99. H. Richard Niebuhr, 56.

100. H. Richard Niebuhr, 83.

101. H. Richard Niebuhr, 91.

102. H. Richard Niebuhr, 85.

The third view is Christ above culture.¹⁰³ Clement of Alexandria¹⁰⁴ as well as Thomas Aquinas¹⁰⁵ held to this view. This view does not see Christ and culture in conflict, rather its concerns are with humanity. This group is sometimes referred to as synthesists as they are comfortable using elements of the world's culture and incorporating them into the church.¹⁰⁶ In this view, some elements of the world's culture can be helpful instead of oppositional. The fourth view is Christ and culture in paradox.¹⁰⁷ This group is considered dualists as they hold the view that every person who follows Christ has the Holy Spirit in them as well as sin.¹⁰⁸ This view suggests that not everything in the world is evil. Some things have dualistic personality meaning they will have value but will also bring conflict. Martin Luther¹⁰⁹ and Soren Kierkegaard¹¹⁰ and even the Apostle Paul¹¹¹ seemed to advocate this view. This paradox captures the tension for the Christian this side of heaven.

Lastly the fifth view is Christ the transformer of culture.¹¹² This group is referred to as the conversionists as they believe that the world can be changed by Christ.¹¹³ Augustine¹¹⁴ as well as

103. H. Richard Niebuhr, 116.

104. H. Richard Niebuhr, 125.

105. H. Richard Niebuhr, 128.

106. H. Richard Niebuhr, 120.

107. H. Richard Niebuhr, 149.

108. H. Richard Niebuhr, 149.

109. H. Richard Niebuhr, 170.

110. H. Richard Niebuhr, 181.

111. H. Richard Niebuhr, 159.

112. H. Richard Niebuhr, 190.

113. H. Richard Niebuhr, 191.

114. H. Richard Niebuhr, 206.

Jean Calvin¹¹⁵ held to this view believing that Christ can overcome the evil aspects of culture. Culture is in a fallen state, and like people, it too can be redeemed and brought to a point where it can glorify God. If Jesus is Lord and Savior over all, he can bring redemption to humanity and over all of his creation.

I reference Niebuhr's work in my literature review as I think the church's struggle in an increasingly hostile culture may cause us to think differently on how we deal with it. By hostile, I am not talking about outright persecution or hatred, but rather the subtler ways in which it is more and more difficult to be the church in a culture that exhausts us in the management of time and expectations. When church members are so busy with their work, commutes, schools and the expenses that come with managing a certain lifestyle, the culture is working against the ability for the church to be the church.

When I first read Niebuhr's book while an undergraduate, I felt that I agreed with the fifth view that Christ is the transformer of culture. I have seen that historically work itself out and find it comprehensive and encouraging. But after 15 years of ministry in New England, I am not seeing it at work and feel we are more in conflict with culture. Practically speaking, the 21st century New England church seems to be in a losing battle against the culture. It has left me wondering if my views are shifting to either the first perspective or the fourth perspective in Niebuhr's work. We are increasingly in open conflict with culture. Do we need to make radical changes? Perhaps it is that we at the very least are experiencing that Christ and culture are in paradox. We are subject to it more and more as the wider society does not know the gospel and what it means to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. Given these two views are associated with the early church and the Apostle Paul, it

115. H. Richard Niebuhr, 217.

seems to make sense. Our experience today with culture seems to be consistent with the 1st century church.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a call to renewal. A call to renew our efforts in evangelism, discipleship and hospitality. To understand that the local church is likely in need of renewal on a regular basis. One of the reasons that Robert Coleman's work, *Master Plan of Evangelism* is relevant today, is because it is a call to renewal, to reengage in the work that Jesus taught us to do, to make disciples. Coleman is not alone in his call to renewal or discipleship. This message is one that is repeated in many of the works reviewed in this chapter, we need to be reengaged in discipleship.

The struggle is real for the church today in the 21st Century. We are at war with social norms that make it more and more difficult to be who God has called us to be as salt and light. It may be necessary to take extraordinary steps to change how we do evangelism and discipleship.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is rather straightforward. To look at other congregations and how they are addressing some of the challenges that Christ Presbyterian is facing in the area of Evangelism and Discipleship in the 21st century.

Rationale for Researching these Particular Congregations

We need the witness of the whole ecumenical family if we are to be authentic witnesses of Christ to our own culture....We need their witness to correct ours, as indeed they need ours to correct theirs.

– Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*

When considering what research methodology to do in this project, case studies seemed like the right choice. In 2017, the World Council of Churches published a work entitled, *Sharing Good News: Handbook on Evangelism in Europe*. There was a chapter dedicated to various case studies around Europe that I found extremely helpful. There was a case study on a revitalized congregation in Rome and a case study on street preachers in England.¹ These case studies as well as others demonstrated a diversity of approaches to evangelism. It got me thinking that in order to find

1. Gerrit Noort, and Kyriaki Avtzi and Stefan Paas. *Sharing Good News: Handbook on Evangelism in Europe*. (Geneva, Switzerland: WCC Publications, 2017), 157.

answers for my thesis-project it would be good to look outside of New England and North America for solutions to some of the problems I was hoping to address.

This was further confirmed by some of the books that I read for my reflection papers over the last several years. Congregations all over the world are wrestling with the same problems and concerns that I am facing at Christ Presbyterian church. *The Vine Project* is written from an Australian perspective with a call to make disciples. *Imagine Church* is written from a British perspective and also addressing discipleship. *A Certain Kind* by Edmund Chan talks about intentional discipling from a Singaporean perspective. These works as well as others got me thinking that we are facing problems that are found in many parts of our world, not just New England and North America.

The congregations chosen may look random to the casual observer and that is understandable. They are scattered across 4 continents and located in 5 different countries. As far as I know, the congregations chosen have no connection between them. They are all congregations I am acquainted with that I thought would be helpful towards my thesis-project.

In Lesslie Newbigin's work, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, Newbigin encourages the church in the West to learn from our brothers and sister in different cultures. In the final chapter of his book, Newbigin addresses how the Western church in the late 20th Century can correct itself in its evangelistic efforts. He writes, "We cannot faithfully discharge our missionary responsibility to our own people unless we are willing to listen for what the living God says to us through his servants in other cultures."² It then seems wise to address Christ Presbyterian and the thesis by looking outside our own circumstances and listen to the witness of the saints from different contexts.

2. Lesslie Newbigin, 147.

Case Study Format

The following format will be followed as I look at each of the case studies. I will get the reader acquainted with each church by doing a brief overview of the congregation. I will then explore how each congregation executes Sunday morning worship. I want to ascertain whether the congregation is overly focused on the Sunday morning experience. After answering that question, I will demonstrate how much the church prioritizes evangelism and discipleship. How is each congregation accomplishing that task and what does it look like in their context? Next, I then will see if, at all, how the congregation is addressing the problem up in chapter one of church members who have little time for evangelism and discipleship. How are they dealing with the fluid schedules of members? How are these congregations adjusting to the limited schedules of attenders. Lastly, I will look at how each congregation prioritizes hospitality and makes that a part of the culture of the congregation. This will be difficult to evaluate given the different cultures and contexts of the churches I am evaluating. So I will do my best to evaluate them in their respective settings and expectations. I believe that in looking at these respective congregations there is much I can glean from them that will inform my thesis-project as well as help Christ Presbyterian church to make disciples.

Central Presbyterian Church, Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil³

In the beginning of my ministry at Christ Presbyterian church, we had an intern from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary who was from Brazil. Wenderson Freitas eventually found himself back in Brazil during the economic downturn in 2008 and finished his seminary work in Brazil. We have kept in touch over the years and chatted about ministry in Brazil. Wenderson recently moved to the

3. Wenderson Freitas, interviewed by the author, via video conference, April 30, 2019.

city of Campinas with the Presbyterian denomination to plant a church. He is working with a core group in the city of 2 million people and wanting to see a new congregation in the poorer neighborhoods of Campinas. Most recently he has been an associate pastor at Central Presbyterian Church in Foz do Iguaçu for several years.

Central Presbyterian Church is an established congregation with 3 full time ministers. The church is over 60 years old and averages 300 people on a Sunday morning. There are 4 distinct groups that attend Central Presbyterian making it quite diverse. There are a large group of retirees, and white-collar professionals as well as middle class families.

Given the many middle-class families that attend the church, the children's programs at Central Presbyterian are quite popular and well done. In fact, the congregation has a good reputation in providing excellent child care and schooling. The ministry to children is probably the strongest program at the church.

The fourth group, university students, is the group Wenderson primarily works with. Not far from Central Presbyterian is UNILA - Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana. The university is a mix of Brazilians and other nationalities. Given the location of the university near the border of Paraguay and Argentina, the university is bilingual. Nearly half of the students are from outside Brazil. The church employed Wenderson as an associate to reach out to the younger generations as well as do outreach to the university. Sadly the ministry of the church to students is staff driven, and very few congregation members are involved.

Sundays are busy days at Central Presbyterian. Like many established congregations in Brazil, they have a Sunday morning worship service as well as an evening worship service. They also provide

a Sunday school program in the morning. The Sunday morning worship experience is absolutely the focus of the staff and congregation. Wenderson estimates that 2 of the 5 weekdays the staff at the church focuses on the Sunday morning worship service. On Tuesdays and Thursdays they come together to plan the services for Sunday. Sunday morning is the focus of the ministry at Central Presbyterian Church.

There are a lot of activities throughout the week on the church grounds. Every day of the week there is something going on whether it is a knitting fellowship or small groups. Discipleship is minimal at Central Presbyterian, and evangelism is modest as well. They have started an outreach on Tuesday nights focused on soccer players, a sports ministry. This is a mezzanine type ministry, no proclamation aspect to the time together, it is simply a chance for members of the church to build friendships and relationships with those who are outside the church. Even though the worship service is central to the life of the church, very few members invite friends and family to join them for worship. Wenderson feels it is a cultural problem in Brazil as he has talked to pastors of other denominations, and they have seen the same thing in their respective ministries. Christians don't invite non-Christians to worship with them on Sunday mornings.

There have been attempts by the leadership to engage in outreach. Given Foz do Iguaçu is a border city with an international university, they have tried to do what would be the equivalent of an ESL program at their church, teaching Portuguese. There are many Haitians as well as Lebanese immigrants living in their city and the program has been quite popular. They have used their thriving children's ministry to reach out to families through camps for kids.

Like Christ Presbyterian in Nashua, they have people who feel a calling to evangelize and they are mostly women, mothers of the young children. These stay at home moms have a passion to

share Christ with other moms and neighbors in their communities. There is no real leadership with this; they simply feel called to share their faith.

In regards to hospitality, that is a real struggle at Central Presbyterian. When folks visit the church for the first time on a Sunday, church members are friendly and will often invite people to a meal if they are new to the church. So church members make people feel welcome when they first visit the congregation. However, if they come back and want to get involved or meet more new people, people at the church do not continue to invite the visitors over or open their homes. Wenderson feels that most people don't really concern themselves with outsiders and are merely going through the motions to being hospitable. They are fine with the way the church is and don't feel a need to build relationships with outsiders.

In an effort to foster hospitality at Central Presbyterian, they had every individual and family take a photo and they put their pictures up on a bulletin board. Each Sunday they would be paired up with another person or family and were encouraged to get together some time during the week. They did this for several weeks; each Sunday morning members would go to the bulletin board to see who they had been paired with to visit with the following week. It worked well, folks were getting together, visiting and being hospitable to one another. After several weeks, the leadership stopped posting on the bulletin board and encouraged folks to keep meeting with others at the church spontaneously and thereby continue what had been going on for over a month. However, as soon as it was no longer being posted on the bulletin board, people stopped extending hospitality to one another. Wenderson feels that they were doing it because they were told to do it, but when they could do it on their own, they stopped and went back to their former ways.

Conclusion

Central Presbyterian in Foz do Iguaçu is not unique, Wenderson shared that in his denomination there are many churches who are in the same situation. Older established churches with nice facilities filled with people who are comfortable with the life of their congregation. Given how busy many people are, it is somewhat understandable. Hospitality and getting to know strangers and welcome them into the church takes time and effort outside of Sunday morning. Being present on a Sunday morning worship service is all that is necessary in maintaining a relationship with God.

I am struck with how many similarities I found between this case study and Christ Presbyterian in Nashua. The congregations are literally in different hemispheres, but the human condition is the same whether Brazilian or American. Both churches struggle with hospitality, having time for one another as well as being engaged in outreach and discipleship. The context may be very different, but the problems are very similar.

Richmond Hill Chinese Church, Toronto, Ontario, Canada⁴

Pastor Virginia Yong is a fellow Doctor of Ministry student in the same cohort as me. I have enjoyed getting to know her and her husband Tony over the last 3 years through the doctoral program. Virginia and I have chatted about her congregation and felt that it would be worthy of research as it is addressing some of the issues that face Christ Presbyterian.

4. Virginia Yong, interviewed by author, video conference, May 9, 2019.

Virginia is a pastor at Richmond Hill Chinese Church, one of the largest Chinese congregations in North America. Richmond Hill was founded in 1976 with a core group of Chinese folks from Hong Kong, mostly professionals and students. In 1985, the church began to see Mainland Chinese move into the area and come to the church. Before 1985, the congregation was made up of mostly Cantonese and English Speakers. In the 10 years between 1990 and 2000, they have seen a lot of people from Hong Kong move to the Toronto area, and that caused the Cantonese congregation to grow steadily. They expect a second wave of Cantonese speakers to come in the next decade from 2020 to 2030. This is due to the fact that the generation that moved to Canada during the 1990s sent their children back to Hong Kong to go to university. That generation has gone to school, married and had children, and now want to immigrate to Canada to raise their family.

Currently Richmond Hill has 3 congregations--Cantonese, English and Mandarin. The Cantonese is the largest at 3000, the English is 600-700 and the Mandarin is approximately 600. In total, Richmond Hill averages 4500 people on a weekend attending their worship services. With such a large congregation, they employ nearly thirty pastors including four who help with counseling and four who are hoping to start new Chinese churches in the Toronto metro area.

Sundays at Richmond Hill are quite busy with multiple services and limited parking. Given its urban location, many utilize other options such as mass transit. Given the level of activity on a Sunday, it would surprise most that Sunday morning is not the focus of the staff and leadership of the church. The worship services are important, but they are geared towards reaching non-believers and making newcomers feel welcomed. Sunday morning is seen as an open house to people who want to come and check out Richmond Hill. In fact, the facilities are open 7 days a week with a lot of activities and small groups. However, "small" hardly describes many groups that meet during the week. Their

senior ministry meets on Wednesday mornings, and attendance is between 700-800 people!

Remarkably, 40% of the congregation is involved in a small group, and that makes up the bulk of their discipleship ministries.

Richmond Hill is very focused on evangelism and discipleship as they have a number of programs that are for non-believers as well as new believers. Their most effective evangelism courses are the Alpha course and Virginia runs a program called FIND (Faith, Inquiry & Discovery) that is geared for Chinese inquirers. These programs as well as sports outreaches, and special events are how many people come to visit Richmond Hill. The church staff encourages church members to invite visitors to come on a Sunday morning. For those visiting, they have a Fresh Start Station, a place where visitors can meet church members and learn about the church and its ministry. For church members, they provide training for Christians called PET, Personal Evangelism Training to help them become Gospel Ambassadors and participate in evangelism and discipleship. If someone comes to faith at Richmond Hill, the church has produced a booklet they can hand out, and also encourages church members to pray with them. They also encourage the church members to help the person fill out a form and turn it in to the office so that a counselor can be assigned to follow up with that person. The counselor will meet with them at least 6 times to make sure they understand the gospel and what it means to follow Christ. After meeting 6 times, they will connect them with a small group or fellowship group so they can build friendships with other believers.

What further makes Richmond Hill effective in evangelism and discipleship is their commitment to hospitality and mobilizing and empowering church members to be engaged in ministry. In my interview with Virginia, she praised the efforts of church members to show hospitality to new folks as well as to long time members. This hospitality is not just seen on Sunday mornings

with food and drink to welcome people, but extends to people's homes. They have encouraged people that they can be hospitable even if their home is not perfect. They communicate to their members not to wait to extend hospitality but to be quick to engage people, whether that be at a Chinese restaurant or in their homes. I was impressed to hear that 80% of the Christians who attend Richmond Hill have had people over to their homes for fellowship and food.

Lastly, Toronto like most North American cities is a busy place and has a reputation like New York and Boston as a place where people work long hours and are focused on making money rather than relationships. I asked if this had an effect on people being engaged in ministry at Richmond Hill, and Virginia said that people are very involved, particularly the older generations. Carpooling, visiting, and helping one another with a personal problems are all things that church members do on a regular basis. In our conversation, Virginia noted that younger generations tend to be more private and unconcerned with others welfare, but the older generations are willing to jump in and help no matter what is needed. They feel a responsibility to help one another.

Conclusion

Richmond Hill is a mega church that is finding a way in a busy culture to keep focused on outreach and discipleship. They are not solely focused on Sunday morning worship experience; they realize it is an opportunity to engage with newcomers and non-believers. The church members are active throughout the week both at home and at the church property. Certainly there is an advantage of having such a large network of people and structures to fall back on and encourage church members in ministry. Teaching programs like FIND and PET are encouraging when you are dealing with large groups. When I attempt to do similar training or programs, the classes are a handful of individuals. So Richmond Hill is leveraging its size and using it to empower its members to

be effective in evangelism and discipleship. As Virginia noted, there are challenges at their church with engaging the younger generations in outreach and hospitality. This is an issue that I find is not unique to Richmond Hill. Hopefully and Lord willing, the Holy Spirit will encourage the next generations towards a proclamation ministry to share the story of Jesus.

Antioch Waco, Waco, Texas, USA⁵

In the Spring of 2018, I had an opportunity to visit Antioch Church in Waco, Texas for several days. I was able to worship on a Sunday morning and interview staff on Monday as well as attend a discipleship class that evening. Before I departed on Tuesday, I attended their staff meeting which was like no staff meeting I had ever been to in a church. Overall, it left a strong impression on me that makes me thankful to have gotten the chance to visit with them even for a few days.

The history of Antioch bears witness to why it is more of a discipleship training center than a local congregation that does evangelism and discipleship. It did not start as a church, but rather the church grew out of a discipleship community. Antioch started as a missions training school in the late 1980s, they did not start the church until 1999. If you have the opportunity to visit Antioch in Waco, it will be fairly evident that discipleship and mission are the priorities versus maintaining the status quo of a local church.

Since the church was started in 1999, they have planted over 33 congregations all over the United States. Many of these congregations are planted strategically near a large university campus. This is intentional as they want to be a movement, and many who attend Antioch churches are young

5. Drew Steadman, interviewed by the author, Waco, Texas, April 15-17, 2018.

people, often students. What is impressive is how they do it and how much discipleship plays a part in their efforts to change people's lives and to change communities.

I attended Sunday morning worship at Antioch and was excited to be there. Given what I had read and researched, my expectations were high as I made my way to the building on a Sunday morning. I have attended many large churches, and the experience at Antioch was not unusual--friendly people, lots of activity with a number of volunteers and helpers. In comparison to other large congregations, Antioch's space was modest. Nothing bad about it, but rather I think it was on the smaller side. The short of it was that the Sunday morning worship experience was good, not great. It was not special or different from other large churches. I think I expected to be overwhelmed and rather it was nothing special. On Monday, I asked one of the staff, Drew Steadman, about my experience, and he confirmed that Sunday morning is nothing exceptional. I was somewhat surprised to learn that this was intentional. Drew went on to explain to me that Sunday morning is not the main thing; rather, it is their many discipleship programs and small groups where they concentrate their effort and time. Sunday morning is for the crowds, but their energy and time is in discipleship. They take this from Jesus life and ministry. Jesus certainly ministered to the crowds, but he spent most of his time with the disciples. Antioch has the same balance, they minister to the crowds, folks who come and check out the Antioch experience. Where they really put a lot of effort and time, is their discipleship ministries. Sunday morning at Antioch is not the focus, the focus at Antioch is making disciples and releasing them into ministry, both locally and globally.

This was further underlined when I attended their discipleship school on Monday night. It was a three and a half hours long, and they meet twice a week which is a lot of time given it is a weeknight programs. The time began with a potluck meal, with food brought by those in attendance.

The group was multigenerational--including retirees but mostly comprised of students and young adults. The time was spent sharing, praying, studying and discussing around various tables. The size of the group was around 30 people. They were committed for a year with a missions trip to Peru as part of their time together. The commitment level and expectations for participation were very high. In fact, I learned that some of the folks who were participating relocated to Waco for the opportunity to be part of Antioch and the discipleship school. Former Pastors and church leaders take jobs at places like Home Depot so they can relocate to Waco, Texas and worship at Antioch. That sounds remarkable and may even be considered odd. However, as I pondered this level of commitment I had this thought: when young people are pursuing education and training for a future career, they are willing to relocate and attend the best universities in order to accomplish this purpose. We would think nothing of an 18-year-old leaving their home and moving hundreds if not thousands of miles away to get the education and experience. This, then, is what people are doing at Antioch, they are coming to Waco to be prepared for ministry wherever God is calling them.

After about 2 hours into the discipleship class, the class hit the streets of Waco to share their faith. In groups of 2 or 3, they prayed, asked God where they should go, and then went out to pray and share Jesus with whom they felt led by the Holy Spirit. After the group came together, there were extraordinary testimonies which was encouraging to the class. Not everyone had that experience, but it was pointed out by the facilitators that lives were changed by simply being willing to be obedient to share one's faith. The results lie with God, the responsibility of his followers is to be his witnesses. I was truly impressed with the class and the level of involvement and the commitment to one another and desire to see Jesus glorified in their lives. There are 3 levels of discipleship at Antioch, and as you go further into the discipleship school the level of commitment gets higher and the classes get smaller. They provide these different levels depending on the person

and their calling. Some are called to minister to their neighbors locally while others are called to the ends of the earth. The discipleship school is geared for every believer who wants to grow in their commitment to Jesus.

In regards to the problem of out of sync and out of time, I have already covered how Antioch deals with this common problem. Instead of accommodating people's schedules and lives, they expect folks to make a conscience decision to prioritize Jesus in their lives and their commitment to be his disciple. As I said, people are relocating to Waco to be a part of this congregation which is uncommon in our context. Antioch provides a Sunday experience for the crowds, but they have expectations of those who want to grow that they will make decisions to allow them to be involved in ongoing ministries. Many church members moved to the neighborhood where the church is located and have made sacrifices financially to be at Antioch.

Hospitality is also important at Antioch in the sense that people need to share their lives with one another. That means being in one another's homes, living in the same neighborhoods, and being available as there are needs. There are guidelines to what this looks like, so it does not become unbalanced and unhealthy.

Conclusion

Antioch is clearly more of a movement than a local congregation. It was a movement in the beginning that gave birth to a congregation and has not lost that original focus as it continues into the 21st Century. The uniqueness of Antioch makes it difficult to duplicate. Folks have come to Waco trying to figure out its success only to leave frustrated, aware that it would mean making massive changes in their local context. Antioch Waco is a counter cultural movement that is having a lasting

impact on people's lives. Of the five case studies, this one is the most unique and probably the most difficult to implement in my ministry context.

In the many books I have read on local church ministry there is language usually about making a paradigm shift and being willing to make drastic changes. Several resources have made the point that the church in the 21st century is not making disciples and that changes are needed. Antioch has the advantage that they are who they were from the very beginning. They are a discipleship making school first and a local congregation second. They are doing evangelism, making disciples and out of that process are planting churches. This emphasis on discipleship is extraordinary and commendable. I am thankful to have learned about this ministry, and its impact on Waco and the world.

Life Christian Foundation Vanderbijlpark, South Africa⁶

Life Christian Foundation (LCF) has many aspects to it, but it is a local congregation. It was started as a foundation for tax benefits and to carry out other ministries like an orphanage in Mozambique. The congregation was started in 1999 with 8- 10 people. In 2019 the congregation has 500 partners or members who are involved in the ministry. The language of partners is intentional and will be expanded on as we look at the ministry of Life Christian Foundation.

The congregation met in rented facilities for worship and was able to purchase part of a Catholic school for its midweek gatherings. Just recently they have completed a worship space on the property that is meant to be a gathering place as well as a place of worship. The congregation is located in the Vaal triangle, about 60 kilometers southwest of Johannesburg. The Vaal Triangle is

6. Sakkie Olivier, interviewed by the author, via video conference, April 25, 2019.

made up of 3 cities with a total population of nearly 400,000 people. The congregation is made up mostly of Afrikaans, people who have descended from the Dutch colonists that settle the region. The congregation is ethnically mostly Western European with some who are African. LCF has made strides to partner across racial differences and so often the worship services are in English so that folks from different backgrounds can worship together.

Becoming a partner of Life Christian foundation is like becoming a member of a local congregation, but with an emphasis on responsibility and commitment. As already mentioned, it is intentional that the language of partnership is used at LCF. Being a partner at LCF, much like in the context of a business, means you are invested in the work and ministry of LCF. A partner commits their time and finances and attends meetings and understands the mission and purpose of LCF. In order to become a partner at LCF, one undertakes a 3-week class that explains the expectations. Once a partner, there is a 12-week discipleship program that all partners go through that further underlines the values of Life Christian congregation and helps to develop friendships among those who are also joining the fellowship.

The references to a business makes sense when you know who founded Life Christian Fellowship. Dr. Sakkie Olivier founded LCF with friends and family, and when he is not at LCF, he is at his family's business in the Vaal Triangle. He has taken his experience in the business world to help in guiding LCF vision and mission. The family business is built on Christian principles, and so is LCF in its ministry. Sakkie wanted to communicate to people that being a part of LCF is more than simply being a member, it is being a partner.

Sunday morning is important at Life Christian Foundation, but it does not dominate the work of the staff throughout the week. Sakkie believes that one third of their time during the week is

dedicated to what happens on Sunday. The worship experience is important, but the staff at LCF are aware that they are a family congregation. In a given week as well as on Sunday they will have 300-350 children on the facility's property, and they want to make sure they are well taken care of and safe while being involved at LCF. Sunday mornings are but one aspect of the ministry of LCF; the facilities are used throughout the week, Sundays through Thursdays.

Furthermore, Life Christian Foundation is the only church that I know of that regularly does not have Sunday services at certain times of the year. At least 4 times during the year there is no Sunday services at LCF and 2 consecutive Sundays at Christmas and New Year's. I could not imagine not having worship services so close to Christmas, but there are significant reasons for this at LCF. In December, it is summer time in South Africa, and many folks go on holiday. LCF does not want folks to have to make a choice between supporting the Sunday worship or going on holiday with family. In fact, they regularly tell their partners that they want them at LCF 3 of the 4 Sundays. At least one Sunday a month they want them to do something with their family and friends. They want folks to be intentional with their time at LCF as well as their time with their family. This arrangement is one of the ways Life Christian Foundation addresses the problem of out of sync and out of time. Their hope is that folks take seriously scheduling time with family and friends as well as being committed to LCF throughout the year.

Hospitality is a priority at Life Christian Foundation. This was true from the very beginning when the congregation first started meeting together. They regularly spent time in each other's homes and would play games together and enjoy watching various sports programs. When they did not have a building, they would pitch a tent and set up games and activities for everyone to enjoy. This is now seen when you are on the property. When the grounds for LCF were conceived, they gave

a lot of attention to making the facilities hospitable. They paid attention to details and the needs of the congregation. They made the space around the sanctuary and outside hospitable. There is a coffee bar on tap as well as many places to sit and chat with friends. The layout of the building, the colors, and decorations are all made to make people feel like they are home. This is very intentional; they want people to feel like this is their spiritual home.

In order for adults to be involved and have opportunities to converse and build relationships, the church spends a large portion of their budget on childcare. It is one of their biggest budget items. In order for partners of LCF to be involved, they need to have their children supervised and safe. The leadership was aware that in order for partners to get to know one another and be involved, the children of LCF had to be welcomed and provided for as well. They even communicate that if parents have errands to do in the area, they can drop off the children while there is a program at the church which has child care. Given the church is close to the local mall, this is quite convenient for many families.

Conclusion

Life Christian Foundation is a great example of how to be a family congregation that does hospitality well. They communicate that commitment is important as well as time with your family. Often families are made to feel the tension between family time and outside influences which are also demanding their attention. LCF is aware of this tension and addresses it in its discipleship classes as well communicating to partners on a regular basis. Encouraging partners to make time for families and friends is refreshing and something that more American congregations could learn from. When interning in Canada, I saw examples similar to LCF. These congregations encouraged folks to take time in the summer months to enjoy time away on holiday. Many American churches fear that if they

do not offer weekly services, folks will forget to give to the church. LCF makes it clear in its discipleship that giving to the church is to support the ministry, and not just something to be done during attendance on a Sunday. They encourage folks to give electronically and to set it up in regular intervals.

Life Christian Foundation is a case study that speaks to how the local congregation can emphasize hospitality, and what it means to make it accessible to adults with children. I was surprised how much money was spent on child care at LCF, but maybe that is something congregations should consider if they want parents involved in outreach and discipleship.

Kwanglim Methodist Church, Seoul, South Korea⁷

I visited Seoul, Korea in the summer of 2018 with a fellow Doctor of Ministry student, Dan Conway, who is a United Methodist minister in Sugarland, Texas. Dan wanted to visit Kwanglim Methodist Church, one of the most famous Methodist congregations in the world, and I was invited by Dan to join him. Kwanglim Methodist Church is easily the largest congregation I have ever visited and researched. I was thankful to have the time to look closely at this congregation in the heart of one of the largest cities in Asia. Rev. Soonjung Kwon, the head of the Pastoral Ministry Institute at Kwanglim, met us at the airport and gave us a guided tour of the ministry as well as answered our questions about Kwanglim Methodist Church.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the average Korean works nearly 2,000 hours a year. This is 300 more than Japanese workers and more than 200

7. Soonjung Kwon, interviewed by the author, Seoul, South Korea, June 15-17, 2018.

more than United States workers.⁸ Seoul, Korea is the epicenter of this demanding work environment. Even pastors in the church are expected to work very long hours, starting early in the morning at a prayer meeting and often going into the evening with more meetings. Folks who live in this urban sprawl are constantly on the move and have little free time. How might a congregation function in this type of environment?

Kwanglim Methodist Church is the largest Methodist congregation in the world. It was founded soon after the Korean War and is located in the Gangnam District of Seoul, south of the Han River that cuts through this massive city. The congregation has impressive facilities which I will comment more on under hospitality and discipleship. The sanctuary seats 4,000 people, and they have worship and prayer services both Sunday morning and Sunday evening.

Sunday is absolutely the focus of Kwanglim, and members often will spend the entire day in the neighborhood of the church, if not directly on the property, from morning until night. Worship services are both in the morning and evening, and there is an expectation to be at both services. Given that people work long hours during the work week, the church's leadership expectation of its members is to make time on Sundays for worship and discipleship. I don't think this necessarily means they are solely Sunday morning focused; rather, they are dealing with the reality that their church members have no time during the work week to gather. Because Seoul is a sprawling city and getting to church in the middle of the week could be a hardship, members are expected to gather on Sundays primarily.

8. "Labour Force Statistics, Average annual hours actually worked per worker," Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, last modified January 2019, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=ANHRS#>.

Evangelism and discipleship efforts at Kwanglim are different from how many churches in North America operate. Kwanglim has evangelists on staff--men and women who run their discipleship ministries as well as outreach initiatives. An evangelist at Kwanglim will oversee a neighborhood group on Sundays and make up to 50-60 appointments a week to carry out evangelistic and pastoral efforts. An evangelist is under the leadership of the elders and pastors. They meet with a neighborhood group on Sunday afternoons for discipleship. So, on a Sunday a church member might worship in the morning, meet with their neighborhood group in the afternoon and then attend worship Sunday evening before going home. During the afternoon, the evangelist will teach from materials provided by the pastors of Kwanglim. They will learn about pastoral needs in the group and set appointments throughout the week to pray for the sick, share the faith, visit families and prayer walk the neighborhood that they are responsible for in the city. These appointments are made in connection with their neighborhood discipleship group. This is an efficient way to do evangelism and discipleship both on a Sunday as well as into the week.

In regards to out of sync and out of time, Kwanglim's approach is one to consider given the intensity of the work environment in Korea. This has already been somewhat covered in the case study, but it is worth highlighting. The operation of the church is condensed to really one day, Sunday. There are ministries during the week, but for those who work, the expectation is that you will set aside one day for the church.

Hospitality at Kwanglim is accomplished in an extraordinary way. Beside the main church building is the Social Service Center. When I visited Kwanglim, I had not noticed it until pointed out to me by the staff. The size of the building overshadows the main church building, which is no easy task. The Social Service Center is open to the community and is used by a neighboring school as well

as other neighborhood organizations. This building was meant to be a blessing to the neighborhood and used by the church to facilitate hospitality. It has first class accommodations that offer food and drink as well as parking and every kind of room you could imagine. On the top of the building is a world class theatre that is used by the film industry in Seoul. This building is a bridge between the community and the church and facilitates hospitality for church members and the neighbors around the church.

Conclusion

What is evident in visiting Kwanglim, is that their facilities play an important role in their efforts to do evangelism as well as discipleship. In a city where space is hard to come by and very expensive, they have made space for both worship, evangelism and discipleship. This was no easy task and took decades to accomplish. It is my opinion that Christ Presbyterian lacks some effectiveness by not having its own facilities. Kwanglim has leveraged its presence in the neighborhood to be a beacon of hope in the midst of a fast-paced urban setting. I think creating a space for people that facilitates worship, discipleship and evangelism is important. Kwanglim has done this well, and I think it is a positive witness in their local community.

I think it is also worth considering the model of evangelists and condensing church activities to one day of the week. As mentioned in chapter 1, people at Christ Presbyterian are out of sync and out of time and this model may be useful. In this way, it may make sense to set aside one day out of the week for worship and discipleship and evangelism. The role of an evangelist on staff is also quite interesting and effective in both discipleship and evangelism. Pastors at Kwanglim function as elders, providing teaching and training. The evangelists function as chaplains and professionals that can help assist church members in sharing the gospel. Many Christians feel inadequate in sharing what they

believe. Consider this approach where members have a person whose job is to articulate the Christian faith and do so in connection with a neighborhood group. I think this model has merit for the church in North America.

Final Analysis of the Case Studies

I think there are several items we can learn from the case studies. In total I would like to consider 5 things that are useful for this thesis-project. This project is looking at obstacles to making disciples. Making only time for Sunday morning worship and not feeling comfortable sharing one's faith in a multicultural world are both obstacles. Other obstacles are not having time and folks not in the same place at the same time to share their lives together. This leads to a difficulty of being hospitable, which was a foundational principle in the early church. So how have these case studies addressed these obstacles?

To begin, Central Presbyterian Church in Brazil reminds us that the problems faced by Christ Presbyterian Church are not unique, and not exclusive to North American churches. They have similar problems engaging church members in evangelism and discipleship. It is a reminder that we are dealing with problems that are true of humanity, not just New Englanders or Westerners. For that reason, we need to not make this a cultural issue and cannot simply say that it is our context that makes us unmotivated in discipleship and evangelism. I think seeing an example in Brazil tells us this problem begins with our hearts and internal motivation.

Secondly, we need to evaluate the importance of the Sunday morning experience, and ask if it is helping or hurting our ability to do discipleship and evangelism. In the case of Life Christian in South Africa, Antioch in Waco, Richmond Hill in Canada and Kwanglim Methodist in Korea, the

Sunday morning experience is not hindering their ability to do outreach and discipleship. This demonstrates that it is possible to have a Sunday worship service and not make it the sole focus. Could we actually envision not having a Sunday morning worship service for two weeks to allow people to spend time with family and friends and even have the chance to do ministry? Could we be okay gearing the worship service for the masses and make them evangelistic? This is a difficult question to consider given the purpose of corporate worship which is to glorify God. Finding the balance between corporate worship and being accessible to the outsider will need a lot of thought and reflection. Each of the congregations mentioned have a Sunday morning experience, but it is not the focus of their time and energy.

Thirdly, set apart focus in the church to be evangelists is quite intriguing. Looking at the early church and the example of Kwanglim Methodist, I wonder if we are missing an opportunity to equip and mobilize people to be evangelists? In the context of Kwanglim, a pastor must first be an evangelist. What would the church look like if pastors had to be evangelists for a time before they entered into the word and sacrament ministry? Our congregations have elders, deacons and pastors as well as board members and ministry coordinators. Why not have on staff an evangelist?

Fourthly, see the value of providing excellent child care so that adults with children can participate more in evangelism and discipleship. I was impressed with how much of the budget was dedicated at Life Christian Foundation in South Africa to make sure that the children at LCF were cared for and kept safe. They were also taught the Scriptures while their parents had the opportunity to learn, share and pray with other church members without distraction from their children. At Christ Presbyterian we have a lot of children, and I know that keeps some parents from being able to participate. It would be worth considering a strategy and budget that would allow us to provide

childcare in a way that would allow parents at Christ Presbyterian to participate more in evangelism and discipleship opportunities.

Fifthly, to see the importance of facilities to create space for discipleship, evangelism and hospitality. It was obvious to me that congregations like Life Christian in South Africa and Kwanglim in Korea have gone to great lengths to create space for ministry and for hospitality. I have been the pastor of a church for 15 years that has not had its own facilities. There are times I am thankful we did not have to maintain a facility or figure out how to cover expenses. I have watched small congregations struggle to maintain their building. However, I was very much made aware through several of these case studies that facilities can really be a factor in enabling ministry to take place. To have space for meetings, to have a facility where hospitality can be extended to neighbors and the surrounding community is a tremendous opportunity. If the congregation wants to be hospitable to one another or to their neighbors, it helps tremendously to have a space that puts people at ease and makes them feel welcomed. We often evaluate homes based on how hospitable they are, and that could be said of a church building as well. Creating a space in the midst of an urban area for refuge or a space that is friendly for families can do a lot to advance the kingdom of God in our day and age.

These case studies reinforced what I have read and studied in Scripture on worship, hospitality, evangelism and discipleship in the 21st Century. They have also provided new insights and considerations to a workable solution for this thesis-project. I am grateful to these 5 congregations: Central Presbyterian in Brazil, Richmond Hill Chinese Church in Canada, Antioch Waco in Texas, Life Christian Foundation in South Africa and Kwanglim Methodist Church in Korea. My prayer is that these congregations will continue to make the effort to evangelize, disciple believers and advance the

kingdom of God in their respective locations, and by their example, inspire other congregations to do the same.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTCOMES

This final chapter is where I get pragmatic and look at what is feasible to make sure this thesis-project is not just an academic exercise. The hope of this entire project is to see how the Scriptures can inform our convictions, to engage with authors who have wrestled with obstacles to evangelism and discipleship and have offered solutions that could be implemented, and to explore case studies that give us actual examples of congregations that have found a way to keep evangelism and discipleship a priority. At this point in the thesis-project, I am encouraged that there are things we at Christ Presbyterian can learn and then implement. It is important that as we look at outcomes, we have a balanced approach and a mindset that these changes may take time to take root at the congregational level. There are no quick fixes, and we should be thoughtful and careful in our implementation.

Obstacles to Evangelism and Discipleship

In chapter 1, my question is twofold: are we making disciples at Christ Presbyterian and what are the obstacles that are keeping us from evangelism and discipleship? The first obstacle is Sunday morning worship. Corporate worship is a good thing, and I am not advocating that it is in opposition to evangelism and discipleship. However, there is a mindset that discipleship and evangelism are optional, and being in attendance in worship on Sunday's is enough to be considered a faithful follower. "As long as I come on Sunday, I am doing what God requires" seems to be a pervasive belief.

The second obstacle is struggling to evangelize in our context. We often lack courage and boldness, and we feel ill equipped to share Jesus in a multicultural world. The third obstacle is out of sync and out of time. We simply do not have time in our busy schedules to do evangelism and discipleship. Furthermore, folks are on so many different schedules and are spread out geographically that it is difficult to come together. Fourth and lastly, we find it difficult to extend hospitality to our fellow believers and unbelieving neighbors and family. Related to the third obstacle, everyone is so busy we can't take time to care for one another and share our lives. Our congregation also does not have a space where we can gather, and that hinders our ability to be hospitable.

These obstacles are what I hope my outcomes will address in this chapter. Before we look at the outcomes, I want to review what we learned in the other chapters of this thesis-project.

What Have We Learned

Before looking at outcomes, let's briefly consider where the thesis-project led me in chapter 2 in the Scriptures, in chapter 3 in looking at other literature, and chapter 4 treatment of a select group of case studies. These chapters combined lay out a road map that will help me to come to some important outcomes.

Wisdom from the Scriptures

In chapter 2 I drew application from the Bible for my thesis-project. As I demonstrated, there are four essential truths to take into consideration. First, discipleship is difficult but not optional for the Christian and must be made a priority. Discipleship is extremely important and the engine of the church. Secondly, I showed how easily we as Christians can make worship man centered, and ignore what it means to be a follower of God. The people of God were worshipping God and at the same

time not being obedient to the Scriptures, and that is not what God desires of His people. Thirdly, it has always been necessary to have courage and boldness to be a follower of God. The Scriptures bear witness time and time again that being a follower of God can be difficult. Fourthly, the role of hospitality is far more important than I think we consider it in the life of the church and in ministry. I was struck when reading Paul's words about qualifications of leaders that hospitality is one that is near the top of the list. Throughout Scripture, God made it clear that hospitality was something that was important in being the people of God.

Reflections from Authors

In chapter 3, we also have four things which we reflected on when reading other authors on the subjects of evangelism, discipleship, hospitality and church ministry.

First, in my first year of doctoral study, Richard Lovelace's book, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* was one of my favorites early on in my studies. It was refreshing and helpful to see that the church has always needed to be in a state of renewal.¹ Renewal of a church is not just for the churches that are in trouble, but for all congregations. We all as Christians are in need for renewal. Renewal ministry is not just for the sick; it is a ministry that we should be engaged in, understanding that it is needed on a continuous basis in any congregation.

Secondly, an important part of renewal work in any church needs to be an emphasis on evangelism and discipleship. Dr. Robert Coleman in his landmark work, *Master Plan of Evangelism*,

1. Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life: An Evangelical Theology of Renewal* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979), 208.

has been advocating this posture for the church for some time and continues to call the church to reengage in evangelism and discipleship.²

Thirdly, there are many examples of congregations who are making paradigm shifts in order to be more effective in evangelism and discipleship. In reading various authors on the subject, I found that what Colin Marshall and Tony Payne are advocating has merit. I think the information in *The Vine Project* could be adapted to Christ Presbyterian church and other similar congregations struggling to maintain evangelism and discipleship ministry focus.

Lastly, as already mentioned in our examination of the Scriptures, hospitality needs to be more central to the identity of the church in the 21st century. In Joshua Jipp's work, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, caring for strangers and one another is an essential mark of the Christian church.³

Evidence from Case Studies

From my case studies in chapter 4, I think there are four things that should be considered as we come up with outcomes for Christ Presbyterian Church. First, the Sunday morning experience needs to be evaluated at Christ Presbyterian and likely many congregations in the United States.

I was recently doing devotions and was reflecting on Malachi's words to God's people about their sacrifices that were displeasing to God. Instead of giving God their best, they were giving God the animals that were sick and blind and keeping the good animals for themselves. This is yet another example of how we can make even the worship of God human centered rather than God

2. Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1963), 33.

3. Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017), 3.

centered. We often put ourselves first in even our worship of God. If we arrive Sunday morning with the mindset that we are to be fed, to be entertained and to have a positive experience we are in danger of making worship human centered. Another concern is thinking that worship on the Sabbath is the minimum to be a faithful follower of God. If this is the case, we are ignoring Jesus' commands on evangelism and discipleship. Worship and discipleship should hold equal importance in the life of the church. Several congregations in the case studies point to this balance of worship and discipleship.

Secondly, hospitality is vital to congregations who engage in evangelism and discipleship. Evangelism and discipleship without hospitality is like speaking truth without love. It becomes offensive and potentially legalistic and lacking in grace and compassion to those who need to know Jesus and grow in their faith. Several case studies demonstrated a strong commitment to hospitality. Kwanglim Methodist, Life Christian and Richmond Hill make hospitality a priority.

Thirdly, the role of the evangelist in the church should be reconsidered in the wider American church. The usage of the evangelist in the Korean church was fascinating, and I think there are lessons for the church in North America to be more effective in evangelism and discipleship.

Lastly, church facilities should be designed and thought out to help with hospitality, discipleship and evangelism. A proper space for worship is essential as well but should not be the only consideration. Many of the case studies gave considerable thought to making their space hospitable to strangers and church members.

Where Do We Go from Here?

In 2004, when I arrived at Christ Presbyterian church, no one questioned whether the church was in need of revitalization. The Northern New England Presbytery had made it clear that renewal was needed, and my hiring was the result of the perceived need. I was hired by the presbytery as an evangelist to replant the church and do revitalization work. It now seems clear after 15 years, Christ Presbyterian is in need of revitalization again.

Church Revitalization 2.0

I will propose 6 outcomes from this thesis-project that I believe will address some of the concerns I have raised in chapter 1. If these 6 outcomes are considered and implemented, I think it will help bring renewal, and a new emphasis on evangelism and discipleship.

1. Paradigm Shift – The Vine Project

Making changes is never easy, and for some congregations it can be quite scary. Using a term like “paradigm shift” is communicating that a lot of change is needed. That will probably cause most people to be more than a little concerned. It seems wise to start with the most comprehensive of the outcomes. If this outcome is followed, it could make the biggest difference in the future and will most likely effect the other 5 outcomes.

As mentioned, I read a number of examples of how churches made significant changes to their evangelism and discipleship ministries. Churches like Christ Presbyterian who struggle to make disciples. I have covered this already in Chapter 3, but there was one resource I found the most helpful. *The Vine Project* written by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne is, I believe, the best resource to

help Christ Presbyterian as well as many other congregations make lasting changes to their focus and ministry.

The Vine Project uses 4 phases to see change take place over a long period of time.⁴ This is not a quick fix solution, but an approach that gets at the heart of the problem.

- Phase 1 – Sharpen your convictions
- Phase 2 – Reform your personal culture
- Phase 3 – Loving, honest evaluation
- Phase 4 – Innovate and implement

Figure 3. 4 Phases of the Vine Project

What I like most about The Vine Project method is how it begins. Some resource on change use tools from business, or they have a program you need to follow step by step. This approach starts with the Scriptures. What do the scriptures say on 5 subjects?⁵

- Why make disciples?
- What is a disciple?
- How are disciples made?
- Who makes disciples?
- Where to make disciples

In Presbyterian circles, like a lot of churches, having a biblical foundation is important. *The Vine Project's* approach is to start with the Scriptures and build from there. I think utilizing this resource could be quite helpful.

4. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne. *The Vine Project: Shaping your Ministry Culture around Disciple-making*. (Sydney, Australia: Matthias Media, 2016), 37.

5. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, 45.

2. Call to Hospitality

In looking at the Bible, various literature resources, and the case studies, the importance of hospitality is quite evident. If Christ Presbyterian is to be an effective church in ministry, the congregation needs to be encouraged in their efforts towards hospitality. It is important to understand that when we talk about hospitality we are thinking in broad terms, not simply having folks over for a meal. While sharing in fellowship over a meal is a hospitable thing to do, we must seek to understand “hospitality” in the biblical sense of caring for outsiders and those who are in need and showing support to fellow believers.

Joshua W. Jipp’s book, *Saved by Faith and Hospitality*, would be an excellent resource on helping the congregation gain a better understanding of how central hospitality is to the Christian faith. Jipp defines the term this way: “hospitality is the act or process whereby the identity of the stranger is transformed into that of a guest.”⁶ I think it would be useful to use Jipp’s book and maybe other resources on what it means to be called to hospitality. If a local congregation comes to a biblical understanding of hospitality, the gospel will be indeed lived out and evangelism and discipleship will be strengthened.

3. Sunday Worship Review

Of the different outcomes, this might be the most controversial of recommended suggestions. There are really two aspects that I think need to be evaluated. Has the worship experience become human centered rather than God centered? And should we allow for other activities on Sunday that would encourage evangelism and discipleship? Given our lack of time and overall busyness, this is an

6. Jipp, 2.

outcome that might free up the ability for church members to be engaged in evangelism as well as discipleship opportunities.

I don't think Christ Presbyterian's Sunday morning worship has gravitated towards being human centered. I am concerned about trends in the 21st century to make worship casual, to cater to the wants of the congregation and to focus on making it enjoyable in general. The Sri Lankan pastor Ajith Fernando's observation in his book, *Jesus Driven Ministry*, has bothered me a great deal. The only place in the world where he hears the phrase, "Pastor I enjoyed the sermon" is in North America. Is that what a sermon is supposed to do, bring enjoyment?⁷ We need to be on guard about corporate worship, it should be accessible and meaningful to the believer. But we must be careful not to make worship about what we get out of it and forget that we are gathered to lift up the name of Jesus our Savior.

When I was interning as a seminary student on the West Coast of Canada, I learned that many pastors took the summer off, at least one month if not two almost every year. Sometimes the church had interns like me or guest speakers or local leadership preach. Some churches, not all, simply did not meet and encouraged folks to take a summer holiday or visit other churches in the area.

This is also happening in South Africa as mentioned in my case studies. Life Christian Foundation takes this even further encouraging people to regularly be at worship 3 of the 4 Sundays. They encourage partners to spend the "off" Sunday with family and friends and use it as an evangelistic opportunity.

7. Ajith Fernando, *Jesus Driven Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 23.

Meeting regularly for worship is important, and we are told not to neglect meeting together in the Book of Hebrews. I am in no way trying to neglect meeting together, but could we consider other models and approaches to worship schedules? If folks find little time to share their faith and be involved in discipleship, would it be beneficial to build that into the church calendar?

I think there is merit to the approach that Life Christian Foundation has taken.⁸ They want their members committed, but they also want them out in the fields that are ripe for harvest. If they can commit to 3 Sundays a month and make the 4th Sunday a day where they spend time with friends and family that are not Christians, is that not a good alternative? There are also several Sundays in the calendar that have low attendance. The Sunday after Christmas comes to mind as well as the Sunday near the 4th of July. Would it be better to not gather for worship and encourage church members to take time to visit family and friends and be with those they love?

My point is this: weekly worship is good, but it does not need to become a burden or a chore that we obligatorily devote time to while neglecting other aspects of the church's ministry, like evangelism. I think it is worthwhile to have a conversation about church member's time and how it could be used on Sundays when they are not gathered for public worship.

4. A Facility for Discipleship, Evangelism, Hospitality, Worship and Ministry

Christ Presbyterian in Nashua has never had its own facilities, and there is a desire to acquire property so we can have our own space. Typically when we think of that space, we think of a place to worship, to have classrooms and to in general help the church gather for meetings and fellowship.

8. Sakkie Olivier, interviewed by the author, via video conference, April 25, 2019.

I think it would benefit the congregation if we give serious thought to what it would mean to create a space that would facilitate worship, hospitality, discipleship and evangelism. What would that space look like? I think we can tend to focus on maybe one or two of those priorities. Making the space good for worship, safe for children or making the space suitable for hospitality. I think those are important, but what about discipleship and evangelism?

The first church I served in was First Presbyterian Church in Battle Creek, Michigan. First Presbyterian is a downtown church with a large gymnasium on the top floor. It also had a beautiful sanctuary and the two spaces created the image of the cross when viewed from above. The building style was very traditional, but it did an excellent job of being a place where worship, evangelism, discipleship and hospitality could take place. It had a beautiful sanctuary, a large fellowship hall with an industrial kitchen to feed and clean up after the masses, classrooms of different shapes and sizes, and space for a parlor and gymnasium for folks to come from the community and congregation to gather together. I am not saying that structure was perfect, but when a congregation like Christ Presbyterian is considering a space, it would be important to see it as more than a worship space or a place to meet for the sake of meeting. Let it be a space that seeks to facilitate ministry, worship, hospitality, evangelism and discipleship.

5. Stephen's Ministry (Evangelist)

Since learning about the role of Evangelists at the Kwanglim Methodist Church in Seoul, I have been wondering if we the American church are missing something.⁹ Evangelists are men and women who are trained to minister to the church family as well as to the neighborhood that they have been

9. Soonjung Kwon, interviewed by the author, Seoul, South Korea, June 15-17, 2018.

assigned. They pray, they share the gospel, they lead small group discussions and minister on behalf of the church in the world. As a pastor, having evangelists on staff sounds amazing and incredibly helpful to evangelism and discipleship.

Unfortunately, we as a congregation are not in a position to hire staff, but there is an alternative that might help accomplish some of the same goals. Allison and I were trained as Stephen's ministers in the mid 1990s at the first church I was on staff. Stephen's Ministry is a para church ministry based in Saint Louis to help churches with pastoral care.¹⁰ The goal is to equip lay folks to assist the staff of a church with ministry to the community as well as in the congregation itself. A Stephen's Minister could regularly visit a shut in, visit folks in the hospital or spend time listening to someone who has gone through a divorce or death in the family. They can pray with folks, read Scripture and be an extension of the church to those who need pastoral care. I think with some additional training in evangelism and discipleship the Stephen's ministry program could be useful at Christ Presbyterian. For people who feel they don't have the ability or confidence to share their faith or disciple someone, Stephen's ministry could provide resources that would help in evangelism and discipleship.

6. Prayer Evangelism and Prayer Discipleship

I have recommended some books and training already as suggested outcomes for this thesis-project. I think there is one more that needs to be considered, and it comes from the last church I interned at before moving to New England.

10. "Stephen Ministries," last modified January 22, 2020, <https://www.stephenministries.org/default.cfm>.

I did an internship at Grace Vancouver and the founder, Rev. John Smed also started Prayer Current, a ministry based in Vancouver, Canada that focuses on Prayer Evangelism and Prayer Discipleship.¹¹ Prayer Evangelism is learning to pray missionally and develop skills like prayer walking and prayer mapping. Prayer Discipleship is about walking alongside a new believer on how to develop a prayer life and ministry. Vancouver on the west coast of Canada is quite secular and multicultural and the materials that Prayer Current has developed takes their context into consideration. I think Prayer Current's reading materials like *Disruptive Prayer* will help people at Christ Presbyterian have courage to do evangelism and discipleship.¹² This thesis-project has been concerned primarily with the obstacles to evangelism and discipleship, and Prayer Current will be extremely helpful in overcoming some of them.

Conclusion to the Thesis-Project

This thesis-project has been both an academic exercise as well as a practical pursuit in helping one congregation in regards to obstacles to evangelism and discipleship in the 21st Century. It is my hope it will indeed assist Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashua, New Hampshire and any congregation that has struggled with similar dilemmas. Ultimately, we need the Holy Spirit to continue to guide and direct us in our efforts to live out our faith and share it with others. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Galatians, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.... If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit."¹³ The church will always face obstacles to evangelism and

11. "Prayer Current", last modified January 22, 2020, <https://www.prayercurrent.com>.

12. John F. Smed, *Disruptive Prayer, The Movement Starts Here* (Vancouver, BC, Prayer Current, 2018), 149.

13. Galatians 5:22, 25 (English Standard Version).

discipleship; there will be real problems that will frustrate us and hinder our ability to be effective heralds as well as disciples makers. However, as the church has faced obstacles generation after generation, the Holy Spirit brought revival and renewal time and time again. My hope is that the outcomes detailed above will bring renewal to the church and encourage the saints to do as Christ has called us to do, make disciples of all nations. Amen.

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